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The Boy
from
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THE BOY FROM BEAVER HOLLOW

A YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORY

BY
Miriam
SOPHIE SWETT

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"Tom Pickering of 'Scutney," "The Mate of the Mary Ann,"
"Coh'n Thistle-top," "Bilberry Boys and Girls,"
etc., etc.

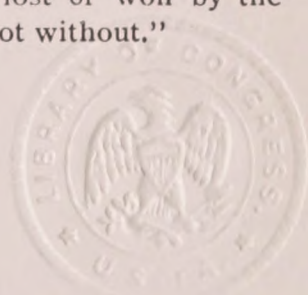


"Now this knight was of a high heart and rode forth valiantly to the wars; and he wiste not that the day would be lost or won by the armour and the sword that he wore within him and not without."



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THE BOY FROM BEAVER HOLLOW

CHAPTER I

“**I** EXPECT that composition decided your Uncle Amos,” said Mrs. Doubleday, as she took a letter from her daughter Hannah’s hand.

Phineas had brought the letter from the post office. Hannah had espied something white in his hand while he was still only half-way up the hill, and she had run down to get it, for Phineas and the oxen were in their slowest mood. She had thought it might be the long-expected letter from Uncle Amos. They had begun to despair of that letter which Uncle Amos had promised to write when he had decided which one of the boys he meant to educate—Pitt, who was his brother Hiram Doubleday’s only son, or Heber, who was his favorite sister’s orphan boy.

Pitt, perched upon the wood box, tried to twist his long legs into a knot, as he always did when he was agitated, and Heber actually turned pale about the mouth. Good, motherly Mrs. Doubleday looked uneasily from one to the other. Her conscientious determination to make no difference between her own boy and the orphan who had fallen to her charge had been so faithfully carried out that now her maternal heart throbs were almost as strong for one as for the other. There was scarcely any pleasure in the great opportunity for one, since it involved a disappointment for the other. She had made that remark about the composition to soften the blow to the one on whom she expected it to fall. It was quite likely that Uncle Amos would say bluntly, "It shall be Pitt, because Pitt is the smarter, as everybody knows." She wished that she could have received the letter in private; yet, even then, it would scarcely have been possible to smooth over anything. They must all know every word that Uncle Amos had written; and he was not one to smooth things over. He freely expressed the opinion that the hard knocks of life were good for a boy.

They made a man of him if he was of the right stuff. Some one's ears were very apt to burn whenever Uncle Amos sent a letter to the farm.

"Open the bedroom door, mother, so't I can hear!" This came from Father Doubleday, who was recovering from rheumatic fever. He had seen Hannah run by the bedroom window with the letter in her hand. Hannah pulled nervously at her long braid and stroked old Priscilla the wrong way until the sparks flew.

Phineas had hurried, actually hurried—an unheard-of thing for Phineas—when Hannah had cried out that the postmark was Portland, and he now stood leaning in at the doorway, privileged by twenty years of service to know the household affairs. Mother Doubleday smoothed her apron and settled her collar and pin, as if she had company, before she opened the letter.

"If he says Pitt, it will be only because of the composition," she repeated, tremulously. "He thought a sight about that composition—'Our Relations with the Philip-pines'!"

Uncle Amos had been at Beaver Hollow

when the school exhibition was held the summer before, and had been much struck by Pitt's graduating effort. "We mustn't let him get the big head, but I tell you, Mirandy, that it was great," he had whispered in Pitt's mother's ear, rubbing his hands and chuckling. She had felt then that Heber's fate was sealed—Heber who loved his books better than Pitt. That was why she had bought him a new red necktie when Pitt had to go without, and had almost made him ill with unlimited damson preserves. Such a position is so much more difficult when the other boy is not one's own son!

Mrs. Doubleday took off her glasses and wiped them slowly and carefully, while the silence deepened and seemed to thrill with anxious heart beats.

"'My dear sister-in-law'"—

Mrs. Doubleday read in a voice which she was obliged to make unnaturally loud and firm to keep it steady at all.

"'To invest your money in a boy is about as risky as gambling, if it isn't as unprincipled, and after sizing up those two boys, or trying to, as I did last summer, it has still

been pretty hard for me to make up my mind which one I would send away to school and take the responsibility of giving a start in life. As you know, I haven't much, and I earned it by hard work, so I have thought a good deal about spending it. It appears to stand to reason that the one that is of a literary turn will make the most of the advantages of an education, and I expect, judging from that composition—essay I believe they called it, but that seemed kind of high-flown to me when a boy isn't but sixteen—that—that'”—

Good Mrs. Doubleday's voice faltered and broke. "That's just what I told you! Amos always was one that thought a great deal of literary gifts. He wrote a poem once, himself, that was printed in the paper!" she said, looking, not at Pitt growing radiant upon the wood box, but at Heber turning his strained face away toward the darkening window. "It isn't because one of you is a mite better or smarter than the other; it's only because Pitt wrote that composition."

"That wasn't much," stammered Pitt, shamefacedly; and his eyes wandered round the

group of listeners. Afterwards Hannah remembered his look and wondered if there had not been a trace of anxiety behind the modesty.

“‘I suspect that Pitt would better be the one,’ ” Mrs. Doubleday went on reading in a husky voice, while the letter shook in her hand like a leaf in the wind. “‘If I could send them both to school and to college, I would, for I think Heber may have doctoring in him, like his father and his grandfather. His grandfather was considerable of a man, but his father died too young to show whether there was anything in him or not.’ ”

“Perhaps it’s the doctor in him that makes Heber find out all about herbs and things; and he made the medicine that cured Comet!” cried Hannah, as if struck by a sudden idea.

“Be a vet, Heber,” said Pitt, with a careless air. “Get up a horse medicine and make so much money by it that I shall be able to borrow of you when I get into college scrapes.”

Hannah twirled her tow-colored braid and flashed an angry glance upon him.

"Some people think of nothing but themselves," she said sharply.

"That's all you know," retorted Pitt. "Horse doctoring is getting to be thought a fine profession, anyhow," he added. But he stammered and seemed embarrassed under Hannah's clear, wide-open eyes. Hannah's eyes were almost too wide-open. Pitt declared that she strained her hair back so tightly that she could not shut them.

"Stop, children, and listen to what Uncle Amos says!" said Mrs. Doubleday, imperatively.

"If there is anything in Heber, it will come out, somehow, even if he hasn't much of a chance; that's my belief; and, anyhow, I don't suppose that either of the young ones, even Hannah, has learned all that there is to be learned in Beaver Hollow."

"Even Hannah!" echoed that young female, indignantly. For she was fifteen and felt every inch of it. While Beaver Hollow wits lacked the sharpening of the city, there was, unaccountably, an early maturing of character. "There is more to be learned in Beaver Hollow than anyone would think," she added, dispassionately. With the ready

tact that is sometimes to be found, oddly enough, in even fifteen-year-old femininity, she instantly effaced herself that Heber might not remain uncomforted. "If I had it in me to be a great doctor, I think I could get to be one in Beaver Hollow."

Heber regarded her absently. He was not even listening to this bit of attempted consolation. He stole a swift glance at Pitt—a furtive, studying glance.

Pitt dropped his eyes. "It's ridiculous about that old essay. That didn't amount to anything," he said, his voice gruff with some emotion. "Why, Heber could do forty times as well as that if he should happen to hit upon the right subject, as I did. Everybody knows there's more in old Heber than there is in me."

"I hope you will do well, Pitt," said his mother, earnestly. "There's a great deal of boy in you."

"For the land's sake! did you expect there wouldn't be?" called an irate voice from the bedroom.

Hiram Doubleday had quick ears, and every comment upon the letter that he had missed he had demanded to have repeated

to him at once. But until now he had himself said nothing. Hiram was a man of a reticent habit. But his son Pitt was the very pulse of his heart. All the success in life that he had missed he yearned that Pitt should have. He confided to everyone the opinion that the Lord had given Pitt a better understanding than he had given his father, and that he hoped the boy would have a chance to make something of his life. He liked Heber, too, but he thought his wife was a little over-conscientious in the way she managed. It was of no use to try to pretend, he said, that your own flesh and blood wasn't nearer to you than anything else.

"I ain't saying he's a bad boy," said Pitt's mother, quickly. "But going away from home so tries a boy! It brings out what there is in him. Sometimes them that brought him up don't know just what that is." Her voice was so charged with feeling that it brought a silence. The fire crackled on the hearth—the October evening was chilly—and the cat purred under Hannah's stroking hand, stroking the right way, now, but absently.

Phineas, in the doorway, began to shuffle uneasily upon his feet. "Whether he's away or to home a boy's apt to be up to more'n anybody knows of," he muttered. Heber looked at him, a straight, startled gaze which Hannah intercepted wonderingly.

"I do hope you'll do well, Pitt, dear," repeated his mother; and she rose and laid her hand upon the boy's head.

Pitt rose from the wood box with a flush on his face and a little frown between his brows.

"I should think that I was going to state prison instead of to have a little chance for myself at last!" He said this almost fiercely, as if he had been eating his heart out with ambition, while they all thought that Pitt was one to take life easily and happily enough in Beaver Hollow.

There came a call from the bedroom, and Pitt went hurriedly in to his father and shut the door behind him with a little force.

"I'm afraid we haven't been quite sympathetic enough to the dear boy," Mother Doubleday said doubtfully. "I only wanted to warn him of temptations."

"Temptations! land! you ain't goin' to get

away from them if you crawl under a hay-mow!" said Phineas, sententiously. "I don't calc'late that Pitt will run agin any worse ones at Concaster than he has run agin a'ready at Beaver Hollow!"

Phineas was given to mumbled monologues; no one paid much attention to them, and Mrs. Doubleday had turned toward the bedroom with remorseful mother yearnings.

Heber who had longed for a chance, as everyone knew, crossed the room quickly to Phineas, and they went out together. Comet, the colt that Heber had cured, was not yet quite steady on his legs, and Heber went out to the barn to attend to him. Phineas had the pails on his arm for his belated milking. As he hung the lantern on the hook by Comet's stall he caught Heber's curious glance.

"Temptations! they're as thick as huckleberries anywhere for a boy that hain't got bed-rock principles," he said.

Heber gave him another curious glance, then turned without a word and went into Comet's stall. Phineas was milking when he emerged from the stall a few minutes later. The musical flow of the milk into the tin

pail ceased suddenly, and Phineas turned toward Heber and repeated slowly, "Bed-rock principles! That's what a boy has got to have whether he stays to home or goes away to school."

"You may as well tell me what you mean," said Heber, and his breath came heavily.

Phineas turned the milking stool and set his hat firmly back upon his head. "A fellow down East Ephesus way—Alf Gates, the tin peddler's son—told me something—something about Pitt. 'Twas something that would change things round considerable if 'twas known. I set by this family. I don't want to see 'em have trouble. But to see things got by cheating comes hard to any straightfor'ard, God-fearing man. I've always had my own idea about which one ought to have the chance."

"Cheating?" faltered Heber, interrogatively.

"'Twas something in a paper, a Corinna paper, that Alf Gates, down to East Ephesus, had sent to him. I've seen it with my own eyes, in black and white—that composition that Pitt pretended he wrote himself!"

Heber drew nearer. "I know it," he said,

quietly, although his voice shook. "I thought that perhaps no one else in Beaver Hollow would find it out. The paper was wrapped round my shoes that I had mended down at East Ephesus."

"Then you've got it yourself! You can prove it!" cried Phineas, eagerly.

"No, I burned it. I couldn't bear to see it and I couldn't hide it anywhere and feel sure that it wouldn't be found. Now that you know it, and others too, we must think what it will be best to do—best for Pitt and—and the others." Heber's face was white and he spoke hoarsely. It was plain that he was holding himself with a strong hand. The man in him stood out so strongly that his boyish looks seemed suddenly incongruous and unfitting. Even Phineas felt this vaguely as he went on:—

"Land! It's easy enough. You just get a copy of that paper and send it to your Uncle Amos. Then you'll be the one to go to the Concaster school; and you're the deserving one and the one that will profit by it. It's the Lord's providence that Pitt has got found out—as much for his sake as anybody's. He can't be stopped too soon in them kind of doings!"

“Oh, not that! I don’t want Pitt found out in that way! It wouldn’t be good for him, I know him so well!” cried Heber, anxiously. “It takes so little to turn him one way or the other! Don’t you see that it would kill his father and mother? They’re so upright! I don’t believe there ever was a Doubleday that wasn’t as honest as daylight—before.” Heber’s voice dropped to a horrified whisper on the last word. “And you know how good Aunt Miranda is, every way. She has been determined not to make any difference between Pitt and me. I began to understand it when I was a little bit of a shaver; though I haven’t realized until lately how good she was to feel so. I knew that if the chance came to me instead of to Pitt she would never begrudge it to me, but would do everything to help me about it that she would have done for him. Yet, he’s the very apple of her eye, and it isn’t in human nature that she shouldn’t be glad that he is the one to have the chance. Do you suppose, after all she has done for me, that I am going to be the one to let her know that Pitt got the chance by a fraud?” The boy’s voice grew shrill and came near to breaking—he was but a boy, after all.

"That ain't the p'int of view that I should naturally take," said Phineas, slowly clasping his knee and swinging his leg to facilitate thought. "I go by the theory that it's good for the wrongdoer to get found out, especially when he has done another fellow out of a chance by cheating—a chance that he could have got along without better than the other fellow, I calc'late"—he paused to survey Heber in his slow, critical way—"for everything comes easy to Pitt."

"Yes, that's true; everything comes easy to Pitt," echoed Heber, reflectively.

"He's one of those easy, happy-go-lucky fellows," continued Phineas, "that everybody likes, and I can't say but that so far as I've seen he's always appeared to be honest; but there seems to be a worm in the bud." Phineas set his feet upon the floor, his elbows upon his knees, and his chin, dejectedly, upon his palms. "I've seen a worm in the bud the ruin of a sight of blows in my time."

"He has always seemed honest, hasn't he?" said Heber, eagerly. "I think he knew how Uncle Amos felt about—about literary ability, and he wanted so much to go to school! No, that isn't any real excuse for him, I

know, but, Phineas, we mustn't let this be known for his mother's sake, anyhow!"

Phineas swung his legs again. "You're a good boy, Hebe," he said; "but when you're older, I don't know as you'll be so ready to heave away your chances or so sure that it's good for a wrongdoer to be shielded. But for his mother's sake"—

For the space of several minutes there was such a silence in the barn that one could hear the twittering of the swallows in the eaves and old Buttercup chewing her cud. For his mother's sake! Even Phineas could understand that, although he but vaguely realized how great was the struggle of the young, strong soul.

"If young Alf Gates hasn't told anybody, I know how to manage him," said Heber, earnestly.

"They haven't been up this way lately, neither he nor his father. It was when I was down to East Ephesus getting the thresher mended that I heard of it," said Phineas, reflectively. "I don't suppose anybody has got hold of it."

"Then don't tell a soul, Phineas! I know it will be better for Pitt!" He turned away

suddenly with a gasp and a boyish sob.

“Don’t you see, Phin, that it’s because they have been everything to me here, and I’m so envious of Pitt, that I’m afraid of wronging him?”

Heber was gone. Comet turned his head and neighed after him, but he did not return.

Phineas tiptoed out to the barn door, as if the barn were full of listeners. His coat hung on a nail beside the door. “I’ve got that paper in my pocket,” he murmured; “and I ain’t even obleeged to make up my own mind what I shall do with it, yet!”

He thrust his hand into an inside pocket of the coat and drew it out empty—the paper was gone. “When Pitt went to my coat pocket after the nails”—he said to himself—“that’s where that paper has gone!”

CHAPTER II

IT had been decided to "kill two birds with one stone," a proceeding which always appealed to the good, thrifty Beaver Hollow heart. Phineas was to take advantage of the fine market for the farm produce which Concaster afforded and carry Pitt to Grimshaw Academy in the farm wagon along with the poultry and pumpkins.

East Ephesus, only six miles from Beaver Hollow, was the usual market, but that was only a small town, while Concaster was a city. To save Pitt's car fare and get city prices for a load of produce was a stroke of business. So Phineas thought, and Mr. Doubleday, who was now convalescent, made laborious calculations on paper with his one good arm, to be sure that it would pay, with the expense of hiring Abner Orcutt's grays thrown in, for there were no horses on the Doubleday farm that were equal to the journey.

Heber and Hannah were to go, too. That part of the plan had originated with Mother

Doubleday and had involved much argument and consultation. Concaster was only eighteen miles from Beaver Hollow, but neither Hannah nor Heber had ever been there. Pitt had once had the great good fortune to go with Abner Orcutt to buy a mowing machine. He had remembered ever since the wonders he had seen in spite of the fact that there had been a drawback to his happiness—a literal as well as figurative drawback, for Mrs. Abner Orcutt, who was of the party, had tied a string to him. He was but eight, and she had an anxious mind and feared she might lose him on the busy Concaster streets. Whenever he had wandered a few paces from her toward some enticing sight there had come a jerk on the string, a jerk that had frequently upset his small person.

Now Pitt felt that he was going to Concaster with no string to jerk him back from its delights and his heart thrilled high with happiness. The primitive Beaver Hollow School, where if you didn't like the master you put him out, that is, if you were a big boy, had given Pitt no idea whatever of the discipline of a large school like Grimshaw Academy. He was likely to find that there

were other bonds in Concaster when one had outgrown Mrs. Abner Orcutt's string.

They were obliged to get up at two o'clock in the morning, and that in itself was a joyous excitement. Hannah had been sure that she should not sleep at all, but one of the great pumpkins that they were to carry had turned into a chariot drawn by white mice, and she was driving in it through the Concaster streets when Phineas's knock sounded upon her door.

Pitt was already up and downstairs in his first brand new suit of clothes. It was a wonder to see him, he looked so manly! So thought his mother and Hannah. So thought Pitt himself, and wondered that he had been able to endure so long the wearing of his father's and Uncle Amos's made-over clothes. He felt, for the first time, as if he really were Pitt Doubleday, a "smart" boy—all Beaver Hollow said so!—ready to show the world what he could do in it, and, incidentally, to make Beaver Hollow famous. He might have expected to perform that kindly office for Grimshaw Academy also if it had not been already famous, having names on its yellowed old records that were known all

over the land, some, indeed, in other lands. Pitt meant to see his name set before the public as an honored son of Grimshaw before many years. It is still in the little Beaver Hollows of the country that ambition grows large. Pitt knew, too, just how he meant to do it, in which he had a great advantage over most sixteen-year-old boys.

Mother Doubleday had a warm breakfast ready, and the great kitchen was cheerful with the unwonted light and bustle at that queer time of the morning. The kettle sang its cheeriest song; Priscilla, surprised and sociable, purred her loudest, and lazy old Ponto grew so frisky and noisy that he had to be put out. Mother Doubleday had not slept; she was half joyous and half tearful. Father Doubleday was proud, but full of prudent counsels. Inadequate himself to life as it is lived on a rocky, sterile Beaver Hollow farm, he felt hope spring again in his heart at a different outlook for Pitt.

"The Lord's providence has given you a chance, Pitt. It's for you to make the most of it," he said, tremulously.

Heber was solemn; but then, as Hannah reflected, he always was solemn. "You look

just like Abel Goodhue—just as solemn as if you were going to be a minister!” she said to him. She felt as if pleasantries would relieve the strained situation. She was vaguely conscious of a strain beneath the surface which was greater than naturally belonged to the occasion. It was caused, probably, by the keenness of Heber’s disappointment, she thought, and the sympathy for him which it aroused.

Heber scowled at her, half-absently. Abel Goodhue was their old minister’s son. He was preparing for the ministry, but it was necessary for him to work his way, and he was now a tutor at Grimshaw, where Pitt was going. It was, in fact, the chief reason why Pitt was going there—that Abel Goodhue would exercise a watchful care over him.

No one could eat Mother Doubleday’s nice breakfast. Abner Orcutt’s grays stamped impatiently at the door, and Phineas, astonishingly alert, blew the dinner horn as a signal for departure.

“Be good and say your prayers!” said Mother Doubleday, huskily, with her arms round Pitt’s neck.

“That’s all that matters, after all,” said

Father Doubleday, stroking his son's head, tenderly. And he was quite sincere, for in the crises of life, especially the partings, ambition dwindles always to a speck. High emotion is a lens which changes all proportions.

Pitt swallowed a lump in his throat and murmured in an embarrassed way that the East Ephesus tailor didn't fit a fellow round the neck as well as old Miss Simpkins did. He jumped into the wagon and sat astride the mammoth pumpkin that had taken a prize at the county fair, leaving the front seat beside Phineas to Hannah and Heber. Then seizing the dinner horn, which Phineas had thrown aside, he blew a lusty blast upon it as the grays went prancing down the lane.

The October night was frosty. (Uncle Amos had not made up his mind before the term opened at Grimshaw.) The stars, in a high, clear sky, blinked in a friendly fashion, as though they had come out on purpose to assist at this start in life and were just as much interested in it as if it were the first they had ever seen; and a great round moon went with the travelers like a comrade, down

the lane and along the highway. When they reached the village, and the others would not let Pitt blow the horn to wake the people as they went along, he whistled rollicking airs. But there was a queer little quaver in his voice, and they all knew that Pitt was feigning gayety to hide the homesickness of his heart. Heber and Phineas wondered if it were not to stifle the pangs of conscience as well. Then Phineas sang an old, old song, "Roll on, silver moon, guide the traveler on his way." Phineas was no longer young; he was nearly fifty, and, as he said, regretfully, "getting to be an old bach." There was a buxom matron in Beaver village, of whom he was in the habit of saying that she might have been Mrs. Phineas Lamb, if he had been one to do his courting up spry. But when he had paid his addresses to her for fifteen years, and felt himself to be gradually coming to the point, she surprised him by marrying some one else!

At Jericho Four Corners, where they stopped at the tavern for the horses to feed, Phineas and Pitt were for a moment alone, and the slow-coming gray dawn had merged at last into clear daylight. Phineas had

waited, recalling the old saying that it takes daylight to catch a rogue.

Now he felt casually in his coat pockets as he and Pitt stood beside the horses' heads just outside the tavern stables.

"I've lost a newspaper out of my pocket. Somebody must have taken it out," he said, with his eyes on Pitt's face.

Pitt stooped to examine the shoe on one of the off gray's forelegs and did not answer.

"Appears singular that anybody should go to my pocket and take out a paper," continued Phineas, tentatively.

"Anything particular in it?" asked Pitt, carelessly.

"Something that I wouldn't have lost for considerable," returned Phineas; and now Pitt looked up and their eyes met.

Pitt flushed angrily. His lip curled as he walked away. He turned back, however, the next moment with an easy laugh.

"See here, Phin, if I have a secret that I want to keep I don't know that it's any affair of yours!" he said. "I know what I'm up to, and if you give me away you'll only be sorry for it!"

"A boy with a God-fearing ancestry like you!" gasped Phineas.

"You don't understand and you'll make more mischief than can ever be undone if you don't keep still!" said Pitt in a whisper, fiercely, for Heber and Hannah were coming within hearing. When they set out again there was no more whistling for Pitt. He was cross when Hannah rallied him upon his homesickness.

They had all been silent for some time when the wagon rattled into the Concaster streets. It was an old wagon and somewhat dilapidated and it rattled a great deal. Phineas, determined to have a full and profitable load, had packed it without regard to appearances. Boxes of squashes extended from the rear and above them dangled a row of plucked fowls. Under the front seat and piled up before it, so that it was a feat of agility to mount to it, were great yellow pumpkins.

"Everybody stares at us!" said Hannah, with feminine sensitiveness, as they drove through the streets of the little city.

"It isn't likely that they see such a load as this every day in the year," said Phineas, proudly.

But Hannah had seen smiles on several

faces and was not happy. She was thankful, anyway, she said to herself, that she had on her best dress, but she grew uneasy again as she remembered her sunbonnet.

They drove directly to the academy to deliver Pitt and his trunk. Phineas said that they were belated; it was after eight o'clock, and he should have been at the market by seven, and the trunk was in the way on the load.

Hannah thought that Pitt might prefer to drive to the academy after the produce was sold, but he did not seem to care in the least how much people stared. He just stared in return with an independent air and began to whistle again carelessly.

The academy buildings were large and imposing, and stood in delightfully spacious grounds. It was evidently a recreation hour and a ball game had been going on. Some boys were hurrying about the grounds with bats in their hands, others with books. They did not look in the least like Beaver Hollow boys.

That was Hannah's first impression, and she at once said so. Pitt and Heber felt this only vaguely, and did not define it to

themselves. Pitt didn't care whether they were like Beaver Hollow boys or not.

"Pumpkinville has come to town!" shouted a boy, and Hannah, who was last to get out of the wagon, flushed to the roots of her tow-colored hair. She knew that red rims had appeared about her eyes, provokingly, but she resolutely restrained the smarting tears. Heber had alighted, and was holding the grays while she got out. Hannah thought she had never known in Beaver Hollow how slouchy Heber looked without his coat. He had taken it off to help Phineas with the trunk.

There came a derisive shout from a group of boys in the background. A stout boy in a sweater inquired the price of turkeys and whether Thanksgiving were not ahead of time. Sallies of cheap wit assailed them from every corner of the grounds.

"Oh, Pitt, come home! come home!" cried Hannah, chokingly.

"What for? You don't suppose I care! I'll show them!" said Pitt, stoutly, as he proceeded toward the gate carrying his trunk by one end while Phineas carried it by the other. It was Grandfather Doubleday's old

hide-covered, brass-nailed trunk, and it was heavy.

The steward, a little gray-haired old man, came hurriedly to meet them.

"Is—is it the new boy's trunk?" he asked. "And are—are you the new boy, sir? the boy from Beaver Hollow?"

He treated Pitt so respectfully that Hannah's spirits came up with a bound. Of course, it didn't matter about those jeerers! They were only boys. Even if you do live in Beaver Hollow, you know what boys are! And here was Abel Goodhue! He could not be ashamed of them, for he had been a Beaver Hollow boy himself.

Abel came out to the wagon and spoke to them all. He had always liked Heber. The winter when he had taught the Beaver Hollow school he had taught Heber Latin out of school hours. Pitt had begun to study it with Heber, but he gave it up. He said Abel Goodhue was too slow for him.

Abel was tall and very light of complexion and ungainly of figure. It seemed uncertain whether his stoop were sickly or only scholarly. He had suffered from a nervous disease in childhood and had been

hampered in his career by ill health. He had an awkward gait and a nervous, abrupt manner. He did not impress one as possessed of strong individuality, but he was generally liked. The Beaver Hollow boys all liked him or they would not have allowed him to teach the winter school. Usually only a man of very strong physique could teach the Beaver Hollow winter school.

It was so good to see him in this strange, unfriendly place! It was like meeting a home face in a foreign land. Even the boys felt that, and Pitt immediately discarded the somewhat swaggering air which he had assumed to impress those sneering fellows.

Abel wasn't ashamed of them apparently. He offered to show them about the buildings and grounds, as the bell for recitations had not yet rung. They declined, Hannah promptly, Heber slowly and wistfully. Heber seemed to be almost unconscious of the jeering boys. There was not a scornful sound to be heard now. One boy had gone out to the wagon and was talking quite seriously and respectfully with Phineas. Hannah saw Phineas give the boy an apple.

Presently Phineas was throwing apples over the fence and there was a scrambling among the boys. There was but one barrel and he must have thrown half of it.

"I calc'lated I'd let 'em see't we had something that couldn't be beat up to Beaver Hollow," he explained somewhat shamefacedly when Hannah and Heber returned to the wagon. "Mebbe 'twill make Pitt kind of pop'lar among the boys."

Phineas was astonished at, and could but admire, the manner in which Pitt carried himself. He boasted at home that a Beaver Hollow boy didn't "dowse his peak to nobody."

They had been introduced to the head master and Pitt had not been abashed. Hannah had blushed terribly and wished that she had not worn her sunbonnet, at the same time remembering that she toed in. Heber had been pale, and his voice had shaken when he answered the head master, who said he hoped that he might come there, too, for he had heard from Mr. Goodhue that he was a fine scholar. But Heber might have behaved like that because he longed so much to stay. Hannah realized

that with a pang of sympathy. Queer enough it was that anybody could wish to stay with those horrid boys! It seemed to Hannah that Pitt was much better adapted to hold his own among them than Heber. But it was evident that Heber longed for the opportunity to learn, and was thinking but little about the boys.

Hark! they were cheering as Phineas turned the grays and the great wagon clattered clumsily away.

"Three cheers for Beaver Hollow!" What a noise they made. Hannah had thought before that Beaver Hollow boys could shout.

Heber took off his broad-brimmed straw hat and bowed to them with quite an air of distinction. You might not have thought, to look at him, that he could do it like that, but he did, and Hannah was proud. She made two little furtive dabs at her eyes with her handkerchief.

"Three cheers for Beaver Hollow!" shouted the boys again, and the cheers were given with a will.

"I suppose it was only the pippins, but I feel easier about Pitt," said Hannah. But Phineas and Heber looked doubtfully at

each other. They did not feel at all easy about Pitt, in spite of his assured manner.

“That chance ought to have been yours,” said Phineas aside to Heber. “But we shall see what we shall see!”

CHAPTER III

HANNAH had a good time in the gay and bustling market. There no one sneered at the big farm wagon and its load, and she was proud when people crowded round to see the huge pumpkins and squashes. The land might not be as fertile as it ought to be, on the Beaver Hollow farm, but it could be made to raise pumpkins and squashes.

Phineas was happy in quick sales and good profits; but Heber was not, as Hannah declared, one bit like himself. "Hannah, do you know exactly what a guy is?" he asked in a dispassionate tone, from the back of the wagon where he was sitting astride an empty barrel, after they had set out for home.

"Why?" asked Hannah, without committing herself. She had suddenly become sensitive about Beaver Hollow limitations since she had heard the sneers of those boys, and was not ready to admit that there was anything she didn't know.

"I heard one of those fellows at the academy say that I looked like a Pumpkinville guy. I thought I would like to know just what a guy is," said Heber, with the impartial air of a seeker for information.

"It's something stupid and horrid, I think," said Hannah. "Not like you! not the least bit like you! Oh, I hate to leave Pitt with those dreadful boys! But, Heber, I know it was all your clothes, and they don't understand. In Beaver Hollow we don't judge people by their clothes!"

"I thought perhaps a guy was a slow fellow," said Heber, reflectively. "I am that. I can't make up my mind about things. I think and think, and never feel sure." Hannah turned and looked at him wonderingly.

"Things are queer," she said. She thought he was thinking how strange it was that the opportunity had come to Pitt instead of to him, and she could think of nothing consoling to say. She had begun to fear that Heber was taking it harder than they had thought.

They were still driving through the Concaster streets, and they just then passed a

church into which a solitary man was going, with a reverent air. A placard on the door announced that the church was "open at all hours for private worship."

"That's kind of queer; I never saw that except on Roman Catholic churches," remarked Phineas, who had once been on a sea voyage to foreign ports and liked to show his superior knowledge of the world. Heber was scarcely aware that he saw the notice on the church or heard what Phineas said, but in the curious way in which a slight impression sometimes returns, that trifling incident returned to his memory the next day.

He was still trying to make up his mind about things, although he had started to walk down to East Ephesus to see young Alf Gates, who knew about the paper which contained the essay that Pitt had read as his own on exhibition day. He took with him his greatest treasure—a valuable gun that had been his father's. Young Alf Gates was a mighty hunter; he could probably be bribed to silence by means of that gun.

Heber did not shrink from the sacrifice,

but his straightforward soul revolted at the deed. His was one of those grateful souls, not too common. If a blow menaced those who had made him as their own, and who, having little, had shared it freely with him, was it not his place to avert the blow at any cost? A disgrace, too!—the hardest blow for their sturdy honesty and independence to bear.

Pitt took it lightly; he probably regarded it only as a joke, a smart, boyish trick; but it would not be so regarded at Beaver Hollow, still less at Grimshaw Academy. Uncle Amos, to whom honesty was as the breath of his nostrils, would not so regard it. Pitt's loss would be his, Heber's, gain. On Pitt's downfall he might rise. That was the most perplexing part of the problem.

As he walked down through the village with his gun, he paused suddenly at the church door. He remembered the sign upon the Concaster church door. Might one find a clearer answer to prayer in a church? At least, the solitude and silence might help to clear his bewildered brain. Yet probably the church door was locked. There was a primitive sense of safety and an absence of

locks in Beaver village, but the church door could not be expected to be open on a week day.

Yet it was. Heber turned the knob softly and the door yielded. The key was on the inside and he turned it as he entered the church. He walked up the aisle, up, up, to the foot of the tall, old-fashioned pulpit, obeying, perhaps, some childish fancy that the pulpit was nearer to God. Childish fancies are apt to throng us all in our sore need, and Heber was but sixteen. He leaned his gun against the pulpit stairs and knelt beside the little communion table.

On Sundays he usually sat out behind the stove with the other boys, and not even Uncle Amos's best suit, which had come down to him for Sunday wear, had always kept him wholly decorous through Parson Goodhue's long sermons. For Heber was but a boy.

His prayers had usually been the formal ones that he had been taught to say, from "Now I lay me" to "Our Father which art in heaven." Sometimes there had been moments of boyish trouble when a cry for help had struggled through the formal

words. He began now, aloud, "Our Father," and a tall figure arose, softly, in the pulpit and looked down upon the kneeling boy.

Parson Goodhue, one of the best and truest of men, had his human weaknesses. There was one which he called in his fervent petitions "an ignoble fear of the face of clay." He was timid and nervous in the pulpit, and he always rehearsed the delivery of his Sunday sermon. He had an entrance from the parsonage garden, at the rear of the church, and in the twenty years of his ministry at Beaver village his habit had never been discovered. No one had ever intruded upon him, and he had, years before, ceased to make sure that the sexton had locked the church door.

"Our Father which art in heaven," prayed Heber, "show me the right thing to do, for Pitt—for Pitt and the others—especially for Pitt! Because I want to go to school myself! Thou, O God, only knowest how much I want it! So I pray thee to show me why the wrong seems right and the right seems wrong and how I may do the right and honest thing without wronging Pitt! The best way—show me the best way, O God, for Pitt!"

The old minister had drawn back cautiously, but he arose again and looked down from the pulpit as the eager, tremulous accents filled the church. Heber felt himself alone with God, and he did not choose his words. The old minister shrank as from a place too sacred for any intrusion; yet to warn the boy of his presence, now, would, he felt, be worse than to listen—especially as it was one of his boys.

Parson Goodhue knew how sensitive the soul of a boy may be. He dealt with those in his charge with tenderest reverence. He studied individuality and respected privacy. Outsiders wondered at the number of boys in the communion of the Beaver village church, while Parson Goodhue never seemed to use direct methods.

Parson Goodhue folded his hands upon the great Bible on the pulpit and joined in Heber's prayer. "Make Pitt do what is right and honest and yet don't let Uncle Amos take the chance from him and give it to me! Thou, who knowest all things, O God, knowest that that is not what I mean! Thou knowest how a boy is tempted when he wants a chance and everything seems against him. It is hard for a boy to learn

much in Beaver Hollow, and perhaps Pitt felt that it was the only way. If what I am going to do about young Alf Gates and the gun is not right, I pray thee in some way to show me that it isn't. For Christ's sake. Amen."

Heber half rose, hesitated, and knelt again.

"And if it can be done, O Lord, give me a chance without taking it away from Pitt."

The minister murmured "Amen," and with his hands outstretched above the boy's head he added, under his breath, the benediction, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"— In all the years of his ministry Parson Goodhue had never pronounced it more fervently.

The gun rattled down beside the pulpit steps. The minister sank back, noiselessly, out of sight, as the boy arose. Heber had lingered to add, *sotto voce*, to his petition that he was slow, but, with characteristic honesty, that he might have learned to pray better than he had done. It was then that he had received, unconsciously, the old minister's benediction.

The door closed upon the boy and left the minister in perplexity of mind. He had understood only that Heber was in some

difficulty with which Pitt was connected. He shrank from discovering facts that had not been intended for his ear. He was glad of the added clause to Heber's petition—"Give me a chance without taking it away from Pitt!" He feared, at first, that Heber had developed an exaggerated self-consciousness and a morbid self-sacrifice. That amended prayer rang true and human. Parson Goodhue wanted only a manly and wholesome religious spirit in his boys. After all, he could only do what Heber had done, kneel and pray, "God show me the right way!" In doing it, he quite forgot, for the first time, to rehearse his part in the Sunday service.

There had never been a trace of vanity in this, nor any of "the ignoble fear of the face of clay," of which he accused himself; only an impulse to rid himself of the nervous self-consciousness which interposed a barrier between him and his hearers and hindered the fervent outpouring of his message. He arose from his knees and went away, forgetful for the moment that he had omitted his custom of twenty years. But he had never felt freer or more untrammelled before his people

than he did the next Sunday. So one curious result of Heber's obeying his sudden impulse to enter the church was Parson Goodhue's discovery that he did not need to rehearse his sermon. He never did it again.

Heber went on, hesitatingly, with his gun, toward East Ephesus and Alf Gates. He felt that his strong appeal for God's direction must bring an immediate response. Far wiser ones among us than the sixteen-year-olds have felt this expectancy, and been almost crushed when they found that God's great, immutable laws go on, that his ways are not ours, that it is long, long, and sometimes then only in moments of rare insight, before one can clearly recognize the Guiding Hand. There was no burning bush for Heber; not even a still, small voice!

The autumn sky lowered heavily, and, although his feet were not weary, they lagged. The uplifted mood in which his prayer had left him had its inevitable reaction, as he went heavily over the slow miles to Ephesus—a reaction which he, being so young, did not understand, even with wise Parson Goodhue for a religious teacher.

Since one must be a sneak anyway, might not one as well be a sneak for one's own advantage? Since bribery and corruption were mean and dishonorable, why should he use them to shield Pitt? What did God mean by putting a fellow in a place where he could not tell what it was right to do, and then not helping him out of it? He said to himself that he was not called upon to do anything. He would let matters take their course. He even turned back once, resolved upon doing this. But then his affectionate heart took control and decided where his unripe judgment failed. He could not let trouble come upon the little home that had sheltered him with such generous love and care. He could not let Mother Doubleday know that her boy was a sneak and a cheat. He could not,—so that settled the question.

Young Alf Gates “loafed and invited his soul” upon a “teeter” in his back yard when Heber reached the house. Young Alf was a “stocky” boy, with an incongruously long nose which both eyes seemed to be trying to look at. The crossed eyes gave a sly expression to his face, as crossed

eyes are apt to do. He alighted from the "teeter" eagerly when he saw Heber with the gun, thereby causing his small brother on the other end to come down to the ground with a bounce and bruised knees.

"I want to speak to you," said Heber; and Alf conducted him out behind the wood pile. Alf had a business bump and he scented profit. Once in seclusion he bestrode the sawhorse and waited.

Heber leaned against the fence holding his gun like a soldier, but with his eyes bent upon the ground. He was saying to himself that he ought to have thought just how to "tackle" Alf Gates. That difficulty was now confronting him. Someone—he thought it was Pitt—had told him that Alf Gates was "as slippery as an eel."

"There's been something printed in a paper about—about the Philippines," he stammered; "and I want to get hold of the paper."

"Interested in the Philippines?" asked Alf, dryly.

Heber came to the point at once—he knew how one had to catch eels, he said to himself—but it was in boy fashion.

"You see that gun?" he said. Alf nodded with an assumption of indifference, but with a gleam in the eyes which steadfastly surveyed his nose.

"It's a very fine gun. It's worth a good deal of money. If you'll tell me all that I want to know about a paper and agree to all that I want you to do"—

"Kind of old-fashioned, isn't it?" said Alf, examining the gun critically.

"I want you to give me the paper and promise me on your word of honor not to say anything about it. I don't think that you have said anything, because"—

Heber hesitated to say "because I'm sure from what Phineas told me and from what I know of you that you mean to make something out of your knowledge of a secret that other people have an interest in keeping."

"Pitt and I used to go to school together when I lived up Beaver Hollow way, and I don't want to get him into any scrape," said Alf, digging his heels meditatively into the ground. "But a fellow hadn't ought to cheat, you know, and you hadn't ought to help him. Seems as if I'd ought to have

more'n an old gun for doing such a thing as that. I don't think anything of an old gun like that, anyhow. Gee Whittaker! wouldn't there be a fuss if it was known that Pitt stole that composition right out of a newspaper! You'd think to hear folks talk about it that there wa'n't never a composition wrote in Beaver Hollow school before! Folks say 'twas that composition that made your Uncle Amos send him away to school instead of you. I don't see what you want to hush it up for, anyhow. You're a queer fellow!" Alf regarded Heber with genuine bewilderment in his shrewd, crossed eyes. "But then I always knew you were a queer fellow."

"I should want you to make me a solemn promise that no one shall ever know, through you, that Pitt has done anything that isn't exactly square," said Heber, huskily. "Of course, I'm not standing up for him. I don't understand it at all. It wasn't like Pitt!" he added with a sudden burst of feeling that came of his bitter revolt from using bribery to gain Alf Gates's silence.

"You can't tell what a fellow will do to get the better of another fellow," said Alf

Gates, sagely. "And land ! that Corinna Courier don't get round in these parts once in ten years! My cousin, Jo Gates, has got a store up there, and he sent us two copies with his advertisement in it. Dad was away and nobody saw the papers but me. I never said a word to anybody; honor bright, I never did!"

"Phineas knew it," said Heber.

"Except where it was right in the family! I thought Phineas ought to know it," said Alf Gates, and his crossed eyes narrowed shrewdly.

"Give me the papers and promise to say nothing about it, and I will give you the gun," said Heber, with a sickening pang of shame.

The deed grew worse with every moment and with every word that Alf Gates uttered.

"It isn't much of a gun, anyhow, and I ain't one that ever helped a fellow to cheat. I don't see what you're driving at. Things don't seem right, anyhow. But if you could say a dollar or two besides the gun, or even your muskrat trap"—

Heber's eyes flashed. He thrust the gun under his arm and started off. He said to

himself that Alf Gates's meanness had settled the whole miserable business! There was nothing more to be done. Besides, how could one trust a fellow like that? The whole story would be common property, it was very likely, after Alf had got all that he could by keeping silence.

"Wait a minute," cried Alf, following him hastily. "The gun isn't half enough, and you know it isn't, for keeping such a secret as that. But I don't want to hurt Pitt, anyhow. Land! I don't believe he'd ever durst to come back to Beaver Hollow, do you? And he'd most likely be expelled from school! So I'll get you the paper. There isn't but one. Phineas has got the other one. True as you live, I gave it to him!"

Heber thrust into his pocket the paper that Alf gave him, handed him the gun, and walked away without another word. At the gate he turned back.

"You promise?" he said solemnly to Alf.

"I promise—though it isn't much of a gun," returned Alf.

At the end of the lane Heber, striding gloomily along, ran into the small brother,

who had been jounced down upon the "teeter."

"Did you give Alf that gun?" he cried, eagerly. "Oh my, oh my! was it for keeping a secret, same as your cousin Pitt gave him a silver watch? Gee Whittaker! don't I wish I knew a secret!"

The blood rushed hotly to Heber's face, his heart seemed to be beating in his ears. "I am a fool!" he said to himself, furiously. "Cheating and lies—all cheating and lies! And they are laughing in their sleeves at me for a simple-minded idiot!"

A little farther on he dropped down beside the fence to try to think whether there was anything further that he could do with Alf Gates. Of course, he could not recover the gun. He must set that loss down to the score of experience, he said to himself, bitterly. He realized how he valued it, this one heirloom that he possessed, as he had quite forgotten in the sharp emergency of Pitt's danger. Pitt, it seemed, had somehow received a warning and had taken care of his own affairs.

Heber would have said that he was sure, before, of Pitt's guilt, and yet this proof of

it overwhelmed him. That silver watch had been Pitt's grandfather's; he had observed that it was missing from Pitt's pocket when he went away, but had asked no questions, thinking that he had probably left it with his mother for safe keeping or because it was so large and old-fashioned that the Grimshaw boys might laugh at it.

All his perplexities, his sharp struggles of conscience, had been for nothing, thought Heber. When he had prayed for guidance, the Lord must have "had him in derision," he said to himself, bitterly.

A shot rang out on the quiet air—a shot and a wild cry of distress. It came from the direction of Alf Gates's wood pile.

Heber ran back, his heart cold with fear. Alf lay prone behind the wood pile, as white as if he were dead. Heber surmised at once what had happened. Alf had loaded the gun with a tremendous charge, and it had "kicked."

CHAPTER IV

“I’M nominated for the Gridiron Club,” said Pitt, looking up suddenly from his Latin, in Abel Goodhue’s room. He had changed much in the seven weeks that he had spent at Grimshaw, an indefinable change which the tutor watched with curious interest. Pitt had said sometimes a little scornfully that Beaver Hollow was not all the world. He had fully realized the limitations of Beaver Hollow; the great thing that the academy had so far accomplished for him was to make him begin to realize the limitations of Pitt Doubleday.

When a boy reaches that point, perhaps his education may be said to have begun. To be the “smartest” boy in Beaver Hollow, according to the Beaver Hollow standards, to know that you have more ambition, a broader outlook on life, and a better sense of practical possibilities, than the other boys, is apt to be misleading. Your judgment has insensibly been formed on the Beaver

Hollow standard. At Grimshaw Academy you looked at yourself in a mental diminishing glass. You dwindled.

That, at least, was Pitt's experience. He wondered, even in his exciting whirl of experiences, how Heber would have stood the test. Heber was a fine scholar and ambitious, but he had not the same sense of practical possibilities. He was very lofty in his aims—visionary, Pitt thought. He had not an eye to the main chance. Pitt doubted whether he ever would succeed, although he meant to help him. But he knew what he meant to do for Heber; he must work hard to accomplish it. He could push his way in the world as Heber couldn't. He was not so clever as he thought he was; that Grimshaw had taught him. But he still felt sure that he could "push his way in the world."

Grimshaw had not been able to doubt his pluck. Work on a Beaver Hollow farm toughens the muscles more than any gymnasium. Sturdy self-confidence, reinforced by those Beaver Hollow muscles, had speedily put an end to pleasantries concerning "Pumpkinville" and "pippins"; at least to

those not of the kind which Pitt received with careless good nature.

He had confided to a certain extent in Abel Goodhue, and the tutor was helping him by coaching him out of hours. That work interfered with the athletics in which Pitt delighted, and he doubtfully weighed the balance between them.

"It's not only that a country fellow needs that sort of thing," he explained to the tutor, "but I've got to make those fellows respect me. Not so much for my own sake; I don't really care, you know; I can easily attend to any fellow who is saucy. But because of something that I hope is going to happen after I have gone away. A fellow might come here who couldn't stand hard knocks, you know. It would be a good thing if I could pave the way for him; don't you see?"

Abel Goodhue did not see. Pitt was always on the brink of confidences which he never fully gave. The tutor knew that the uncle had been expected to send Heber to school, but had decided to send Pitt instead. Pitt had talked freely of his great good luck in getting there. The tutor's own

opinion was that Heber was rather slow. He thought it had been wise to choose Pitt instead.

"I wouldn't try for popularity, if I were you," said the tutor, when Pitt conveyed that information about the Gridiron Club.

"A fellow doesn't try for that, you know," said Pitt, flushing a little; "it comes to him. At least if I have done anything with that in view it hasn't been for myself. I don't care anything about it."

"I know you don't," returned the tutor, looking at him with a wonder that had a trace of wistfulness in it. Abel longed to have the boys like him, and they never did. Ill health and a nervous awkwardness passed with them for a lack of manliness, the unpardonable sin in a boy's eyes. "I—I only meant," he added, hesitatingly, "that to make that an aim might interfere with your progress. Then, too, the dues are a consideration. They're rather large at the Gridiron Club."

"I—I think I could find a way to manage that," said Pitt, a little shamefacedly. "I've been rather fortunate in some ways." He turned his head to escape Abel Goodhue's

wondering eyes. Abel knew perfectly the slender resources of the Beaver Hollow farm, and that Uncle Amos was neither rich nor liberal. "I sha'n't let that hinder me if I want to join the club," added Pitt, somewhat grandly. "They've nominated me because I saved the day for their ball team when Stanhope, the catcher, sprained his wrist. The boys brought me back to school on their shoulders, you know. We always could play ball at Beaver Hollow. Some of the snobs are going to try to keep me out. I should like to take the wind out of their sails! I should feel as if it were for the honor of Beaver Hollow as well as for my own."

Pitt had heard that Phineas was saying at home that a Beaver Hollow boy never "dowsed his peak." He meant they should hear, at home, that Grimshaw was finding that out. His eyes sparkled eagerly as he raised them to the tutor's. "And, besides, there's another reason why I want to do it," added Pitt. He looked at Abel Goodhue as if he wished him to inquire what that reason was, but the tutor was not to be beguiled.

The tutor had received a letter from his father, the old minister of Beaver Hollow, which was weighing heavily upon his sensitive mind. "I am glad," wrote Parson Goodhue, "that you have the opportunity to watch over the welfare of one of our own Beaver Hollow boys. I will admit that I do not altogether understand Pitt Doubleday. I have angled for him patiently, hopefully, but I cannot feel that I have secured him. He is quick and clever and has much boyish self-esteem. But, to an unusual degree, for a boy of that nature, he can be influenced through his affections. The attachment between him and his cousin Heber has been a beautiful thing. I was somewhat surprised to see that Pitt appeared unduly elated that the opportunity to go away to school was given to him, instead of to Heber, as was expected; but he is very ambitious of worldly success, and perhaps an unselfish spirit was scarcely to be expected of him in a matter like that. His is not so beautiful and spiritual a nature as Heber's, but it has strength, and I hope for its development in all goodness. I am sure that you will be watchful, and if he should

be in any special difficulty or danger"—good Parson Goodhue must have been thinking when he wrote that of what he had overheard in the church—"that you will do all in your power to help him. You know how my heart yearns over all our boys."

The Gridiron Club was the oldest and the most exclusive of the academy societies. Its members came usually from families of wealth or position; but by the inevitable democracy of a boys' school, the cleverest boys were there also, wherever they came from—any who had gained honors in special lines, and almost always the idol of the hour. In a boys' school the winning qualities of the idol of the hour are apt to be as indefinable as in the great world outside. Pitt's success in saving the day for the Gridiron Club's nine, and the great enthusiasm with which it had been received, caused Abel Goodhue to fear that Pitt might become the idol of the hour, and he foresaw great danger for him in that "bad eminence."

"I asked them to put off the election until next month," pursued Pitt. "I'm not quite sure that it's what I want. Besides, to tell the truth, I'm not in funds just

now; I only expect to be. I suppose those fellows will say that I am afraid I sha'n't be elected. A fellow wouldn't like that. It takes an unanimous vote, you know."

"I think they would probably elect you," said Abel Goodhue, slowly. "The question is whether it would be worth your while."

Pitt returned to his Latin; he appreciated the tutor's kind intentions and his help, but he said to himself that that club affair was a matter that a fellow must decide for himself.

After all, the tutor thought, there was little danger that anything would take Pitt's mind from his studies. Only his strength of body and his need of outdoor exercise saved him from relapsing into the dullest of "digs"; in fact, Abel had felt called upon to warn him several times of the danger to body and mind that lay in that direction. He had seen wrecks at Grimshaw in his time, mental and physical wrecks; they were very apt to be bright and poor country boys.

It was language that Pitt was inclined to "dig" at.

"I want to cultivate my gift of expres-

sion," he explained to the tutor. "I never shall need any more mathematics than will help me to keep account of my expenses on my cuffs. Or, no—I sha'n't be able to use my cuffs for that! They will be needed for other things."

"You seem to have settled upon an occupation in life," the tutor said gravely.

"Had it settled for me long ago—all cut and dried," Pitt answered. But there was always a sudden halting place in his confidences.

Abel Goodhue helped him to develop the gift of expression which he really had and to eschew the higher mathematics so far as possible—which was not very far, since the elective system did not prevail at Grimshaw. He was not afraid of directing the mental development of this Beaver Hollow boy, but he did not know how to angle for him morally and spiritually as his father did. That is, indeed, one of the higher gifts and graces bestowed only upon the prophets and seers.

Pitt stayed at school to "dig" through the Thanksgiving vacation. He would save the money that the trip would cost, also, he

said. Abel Goodhue, although it was a sacrifice, remained too. There were about a dozen other boys who remained, and they happened to be an unfortunate assortment of the more reckless and what Pitt called the "snobs." Two of them had only been restrained from Pumpkinville pleasantries by the Beaver Hollow muscle.

"I hate it, you know," Pitt had explained, when the tutor came upon him struggling with needle and thread in the effort to mend his jacket torn in the affray. "It's admitting your brains to be a failure when you use your fists. Yet there are times— You see there are reasons why I must make them respect Beaver Hollow. It had to be done."

"Respect Beaver Hollow's brute force?" queried the tutor with a touch of patient scorn.

"There are fellows who will respect nothing else," said Pitt, with his sixteen-year-old wisdom.

"I wish the unmanly art of self-defense might be banished from Grimshaw," said the tutor, earnestly. "Of course I can do nothing," he glanced ruefully at his feeble frame; "my motives would be suspected."

There was a trace of bitterness in his tone; what young man can be wholly patient with physical infirmities?

"I wish I could be sure that you would use your influence against it," he went on. "You have proved your courage and muscle; now show them that a boy may have these and yet be ruled by his gentlemanly instincts."

"I don't want to fight them," said Pitt, sententiously. He bit off his thread with a queer grimace. "I have plenty of other things to attend to. I think, myself, that the world ought to have got altogether beyond the appeal to brute force. But you can't expect Grimshaw Academy to set the example."

"Grimshaw is a little world in itself; you boys haven't anything to do with the great world as yet," said the tutor. "You are going to have influence here, but I am afraid you are a little inclined to be pugnacious. Woodrow said that you forced a fight with him."

Pitt sewed steadily for a moment, and then gave his whole attention to tying a knot in his thread.

"I have been reading *The Truce of the*

Bear, and I know Corny Woodrow," he at length laughed. "But I'll not fight any more. I give you my word of honor that I'll not. Mending a jacket is as good as a sermon. No, I'll not fight any more. It was chiefly for the honor of Beaver Hollow that I did it and for the sake of a Beaver Hollow boy who may come after me."

"Come after you?" echoed the tutor. "When he comes all these boys will be gone."

"I mean to leave Beaver Hollow writ large on the walls," said Pitt, jocosely. "And they may not all be gone. Sometimes a little of Grimshaw has to go a long way with a boy. Anyhow, I needn't fight any more. I think I have settled them."

But Pitt was mistaken. His self-confidence restored by recent experiences had misled him. He had not settled them.

"At least those fellows who are staying will not interfere with my 'dig,'" Pitt had said cheerfully to the tutor. In fact, when he knew who were to stay he had been tempted to go home. But he would not allow himself to go for that reason. No such gang as that should scare a Beaver

Hollow boy, he declared to himself, stoutly. "It's lucky I promised not to fight. I might have another jacket to mend," he said grimly to Abel Goodhue.

The Thanksgiving day dinner was at two o'clock—a stiff and gloomy affair over which Pitt choked with longing for the good cheer of home, and into which Abel Goodhue and the master who presided tried in vain to infuse something of the spirit of the season. The other boys were homeless and indifferent to the season which had few associations for them, but were sulky over the fare, which varied from the usual routine only to the extent of turkey and plum pudding. But there were boxes upstairs—yes, there were boxes upstairs. Pitt knew that there was to be a spread and that he was the only boy not invited. They were of the crew who cried "Pumpkinville," and at the best a boy who associated with a tutor was scorned in their set.

Pitt went to walk with Abel Goodhue after dinner. They had a long tramp and the twilight was falling when they returned. It was dark in the long corridor where Pitt roomed next to the tutor. He stumbled

against an empty, overturned box at his door. When he turned the knob he found a string of cooked sausages dependent from it.

It had been a long string; the other half was hanging from the tutor's door, having evidently broken in the middle while an attempt was being made to tie the doors together with it. Such strings of sausages were used to garnish the Thanksgiving fowls at Beaver Hollow.

Pitt understood in a moment what had happened. Hannah had written that they meant to send him a Thanksgiving box from home. It had come in his absence and those boys had rifled it!

A dainty card was suspended beside the sausages:—

The honor of Mr. Pitt Doubleday's presence is requested at HIGH TEA IN THE GYM at FIVE O'CLOCK.

Pitt had been obliged to take the card to the window at the end of the corridor to read it. The tutor being nearsighted had gone into his room without observing the decoration of his door knob.

"I shall take no notice of that," said Pitt, aloud, "but they shall answer to me for the contents of my box!"

Something whirled like a lasso over his head. In the dim light from the window he saw that it was a worsted muffler, red and gray in color. He recognized Hannah's favorite colors and Hannah's handiwork, even as it was fastened tightly round his waist, and he was drawn, with irresistible force and velocity, down the long, dark corridor toward the "gym."

CHAPTER V

IT was clear that an invitation to the "gym" spread was not a thing to be refused! Pitt was whirled inside the door, breathless, boiling with rage, yet perfectly powerless to help himself. The lasso—the worsted muffler which Hannah had sent him and which they had taken out of his Thanksgiving box—had been fastened round him in such a way as to pinion his arms tight. A dozen had fallen upon one and Beaver Hollow muscle was useless.

A table was spread daintily, but with somewhat fantastic decorations. Strings of doughnuts were suspended from the chandelier above it; they were round, with holes in the middle, and Hannah always made them as large, almost, as saucers. Hannah was proud of her doughnuts, and was always so pleased that the boys liked them better than other people's doughnuts.

Suspended by long strings above the table were two blue yarn stockings, filled with

butternuts. At one end of the table a skinny rooster was propped up on the platter as if he were alive. How well acquainted with him Pitt was and how well he understood the sacrifice that had sent him! (They had to "turn" their turkeys for groceries at the Beaver Hollow farm.) Hannah felt great pride in her herb bed and had a way of keeping some green sage sprays for Thanksgiving garniture. There were bits of green sage about the fowl, and a large printed sign above him announced, "The sage of Beaver Hollow."

Corny Woodrow had perpetrated that, thought Pitt. Corny had quite a reputation among the boys as a wit. He and Kendali Brewer, a small boy whose parents were in India, were the only members of the Gridiron Club among the "left-overs." Corny's father had been a Grimshaw boy, and one of those who had done honor to the academy as a statesman. Corny was a clever boy, but he had not an agreeable individuality; there was a rough side to his character and a doubt existed as to whether he were altogether "straight." He was in the Gridiron Club only because of his antecedents and his cleverness.

"We regret to have hurried you," said little Kendall Brewer, with elaborate politeness, "but the extherthitheth were about to begin." Kendall struggled under the combined disadvantages of small stature, a lisp, an over-elegant manner, and a single eyeglass; and sometimes he needed the protection of his friends, especially in the matter of the eyeglass, although he could show an oculist's affidavit that it was necessary. "Beaver Hollow ith tho genewouthly wepwe-thented, that we athk you to acthept the theat of honor at the hoth's wight," continued Kendall, who seemed to have been constituted master of ceremonies.

The lasso from which Pitt had not been able to loosen himself was jerked suddenly, and he was rushed round the table and thrust into a seat. He was trying desperately to calm his angry passions sufficiently to think of the best course to pursue, when his eye fell upon a huge turnover—Hannah would make her eatables large, perhaps because of her experience of boy appetites. A bit of paper lay upon it with a scrawl in Hannah's schoolgirl hand:—

"I want Mr. Goodhue to have half of this,

because he used to like a piece of apple turnover out of my dinner pail."

Pitt had been trying to think that he could carry off the affair as a joke; that he could be quick-witted enough—he certainly had the advantage in that way over those fellows—when he recovered his breath and his temper to make himself master of the situation. But the difficulty was for a fellow to recover his temper under such circumstances as these! Corny Woodrow took the seat beside him, with an ironical smile.

The long table was laden with delicacies; there had been boxes from Delmonico's and a great hamper of fruit from Florida. Little Kendall had friends in Philadelphia who sent him the daintiest of bonbons. It was a beautiful table; why had they needed to make it grotesque with Hannah's homely viands and place him in this uncomfortable situation? thought Pitt, with wonder at what seemed to him their coarse stupidity.

He was not humiliated in the way in which they had expected; but that they could not know. He was full of angry shame, not because he had come from Beaver Hollow and was accustomed to homelier

conditions than they, but because he felt that it was a reflection upon his cleverness that he should have allowed them to get him into this "scrape," and because he could think of no way to get out of it with dignity. He attempted to withdraw his arms from the pinioning scarf, and one of the boys offered, with a show of extreme politeness, to untie it. The force with which Pitt had been drawn down the corridor had tied the knot very tight. Corny Woodrow drew his pocketknife to cut it.

"No! I'll not have it cut!" cried Pitt. "It means a good deal to me, if you do think it's a ridiculous-looking thing. My sister knit it. She spent hours and hours doing it and thinking all the time how I should like it. She worked at it when she was tired, and did it instead of making the furbelows for herself that girls like. It's the same way with those blue yarn stockings that look so funny dangling over your fine table. Only, my mother knit those; she hasn't much time to knit, and one of her hands is half paralyzed. It's creeping paralysis, too; every time I have a pair, I think she may never knit me another."

An astonished silence had fallen all the

length of the table. Corny Woodrow stirred uneasily in his seat. "'Tis sentiment kills me, says I,'" he quoted, in a stage whisper, audible all the way down the table.

"Hear, hear! thpeech, thpeech!" cried little Kendall Brewer, and the cry was echoed with a great pounding of knife handles upon the table.

"I don't want to make a speech," said Pitt. "I only wish to explain why I can't join in any festivities where disrespect is shown to treasures—yes, treasures," he repeated the word with the hot blood dyeing his face at the disdainful laugh with which it was received, "sent me from home. I'm sorry for you fellows who haven't any homes. I don't think I realized until I came here, how great a thing it is to have a home. If being fond of home associations and—and home affections"—Pitt faltered a little and looked shamefaced, but stuck to his text bravely—"if that is what you sneer at as sentiment, I guess we have a lot of it at Beaver Hollow, and I'm very glad of it."

There were two or three cheers from the farther end of the table; a home-sick sob mingled clearly with one of them.

"Are you going to cheer for a fellow that

toadies to a tutor?" cried Corny Woodrow. "Here's to Tutor Goodhue's chum," he hissed. There was a low, thin, feline hiss that was peculiar to Grimshaw. It was seldom used, being considered the severest possible form of reprobation, and it was evident that the majority of the boys did not think that Pitt deserved it. There was even a cry of "Shame!" from several boys, for this was a mixed crowd, and Corny Woodrow was the acknowledged leader of only a few. Hisses, cheers, and cries of "Shame!" mingled in a confused uproar. Yet it was hushed instantly when Pitt began to speak.

Curiosity to hear what the Beaver Hollow boy had to say was evidently still the strongest feeling, and fully half the boys sympathized with him. Sentiment is not by any means an unknown quantity among boys, and moreover, many of them understood that they were only helping Corny Woodrow to satisfy a private grudge—the outcome of a triumph of Beaver Hollow muscle in an encounter which Pitt thought had been forced upon him by persistent nagging and jeers.

"There's another way in which we are

different in Beaver Hollow," said Pitt, "and that is that we fight squarely." Then the cheers got the better of the hisses altogether. "It's never twelve to one at Beaver Hollow!" continued Pitt, with a ring of scorn in his voice.

"It was only for fun!" piped a high voice in the pause. That was young Gilroy, whose father was an army officer stationed on the western frontier, and whose mother had died in the last year.

"We didn't want a boy left out, and you wouldn't come," explained Sam Hitchcock, with a laugh. Sam was a boy who could distinguish himself in debate, but had no muscle with which to back up his argument.

"I'm not offering any objections to the way I came," said Pitt, quickly. "I can stand a little horse-play as well as another fellow. But I don't allow people to meddle with my private possessions, whether they are sacred, as in this case, or not."

A boy held up the platter on which the ancient rooster stood upright. "Sacred possession! The sage of Beaver Hollow!" he cried. "Must be one of Doubleday's relatives."

The crowd was not quite cheap enough to regard this as a witticism, but it laughed for the sake of hilarity.

"I don't allow anyone to open my trunks or boxes," repeated Pitt, with judicial firmness. "If it occurs again I shall"—Pitt paused; there was a lump in his throat that had to be choked down. There was a dead silence. "I shall report the outrage to the proper authorities."

One moment of hushed amazement and then groans and hisses arose.

"I came here intending to make Beaver Hollow respected," continued Pitt, instantly commanding a hearing. "I tried it after your own way. I'm—I'm sorry to say that it's the Beaver Hollow way, too. When a fellow sauces us we punch his head; if he does more we thrash him soundly. I think I know just what fellow opened my box. There are some here who wouldn't quite have stooped to do it, although they have not scorned to share the entertainment that it offered. I think that boy honor is a little queerer here than it is at Beaver Hollow. But never mind! I know, as I say, who opened my box, and I can thrash them in-

dividually or collectively. I have proved that in one or two instances at least"—

Poor, foolish Pitt, who had to be a boy and make his ill-timed boast!— Hisses—a storm of hisses with only a cheer or two thrown in.

"But now I have decided," continued Pitt, hushing the tumult sufficiently to be heard, "I have decided, or rather it has been suggested to me"—

"The tutor, the tutor suggested it to him!" shouted a voice.

—"That the appeal to brute force is unworthy of a gentleman. That it is brainless and stupid, and—and that boys should be in better business than pommeling each other."

Pitt felt that this was an anticlimax to the somewhat grandiloquent beginning of his sentence. In truth, he was not only afraid of a too-soaring rhetoric, but he was becoming a little confused—a dozen to one were a good many!

"In fact, I have given my word that I will not fight again"—

"The tutor! He has given his word to Tutor Goodhue! Coward! coward!" The groans and hisses seemed general now.

The Grimshaw ideals had not risen above the ancient notion that to fraternize with a teacher is treachery, and Tutor Goodhue was not a favorite.

"I shall not fight," repeated Pitt, still with his grand air, although, in truth, the table wavered a little before his eyes and the boys' faces began to look a long way off, or, indeed, like something seen only vaguely, as in a dream.

He pulled himself together with an effort. He recalled oddly enough the time when he had thrashed big Billy Comerford for tormenting Hannah's kitten. He had felt bruised and sore in body and spirit then, and he felt so now. His mother had blamed him then; she had said that fighting was low and mean. But what could one do with a miserable bully like Billy Comerford?

"Take the kitten and run home with it," his mother had said. But it was Pitt's theory that you had to teach Billy Comerford not to do it again! He had been but ten then, but he had been puzzled. The same problem was puzzling him now; but he knew, now, that he shared it with wiser heads than his own, and that the trying to puzzle things out was a discipline.

"Coward! coward!" they shouted, and stung him into self-possession again.

"I shall not fight any of you, but I shall demand the restoration of my property."

He pushed back his chair. He took the red and gray muffler that hung over the back of the chair and folded it carefully. There were whispered conferences among the boys. They were looking at Corny Woodrow to see what he was going to do.

Corny himself was looking undecided. He was anxious to do just what might be expected of a leader, which it was his great ambition to be. It ought not to be hard to put down this country bumpkin—not, at least, with all that he knew about him! He had meant to reserve that knowledge, his crowning triumph of revenge, for another occasion. He had meant only to humiliate Pitt; to have a little fun with him, as the boys said, on this occasion. But the Beaver Hollow boy seemed to be coming out of it pretty well, himself. There were half-muffled cheers here and there. Corny knew that it would take but little to turn the tide of sympathy wholly toward the Beaver Hollow boy. Pitt walked steadily down be-

side the table with the folded muffler under his arm.

"Better stay, now you're here! Only tea and seed cakes downstairs!" called a voice in friendly tones.

"Not where I've been called a coward," answered Pitt, sturdily.

"Oh, take that back, fellows! it's Thanksgiving!" called the friendly voice. It belonged to young Gilroy.

Pitt had stopped to cut down the blue yarn stockings that hung over the table. He hesitated. Here was another phase of the problem! Should he stay if they took it back? Perhaps they had done it only for fun; they could not realize what the homely gifts from Beaver Hollow meant to him. Pitt had generous impulses, and there was a longing for good fellowship in his bruised and homesick heart.

"Coward! if—if that kind of a coward were all, we might perhaps take it back!" shouted Corny Woodrow, pounding on the table for silence. "But he is a coward in a far worse than a physical way! I didn't mean to tell what I knew until the right time came; until the Gridiron Club voted on

his nomination! But it's high time he was kicked out of every honest fellow's company! He's a cheat! a sneaking cheat! He stole the essay out of a paper, the one that he read on his graduation day. He made his old uncle think that he wrote it, to get the chance for an education—the chance to come here to Grimshaw among gentlemen! He stole the chance away from his cousin who ought to have had it!"

Pitt's face was deadly pale under the flaring lights. The stockings shook in his hands and the butternuts were spilled over the table.

"It's—it's a lie!" he cried; but his voice shook.

Corny Woodrow started toward him threateningly, but someone held him back. He had lost his temper entirely, or he would have known how to arouse the boys and use the advantage that he had gained. He seized Hannah's apple turnover and threw it at Pitt, who had turned toward the door. It hit him squarely, and he turned an apple-smeared cheek toward his foes.

This was in the nature of a "lark"! The boys had lost their sympathy for the Beaver

Hollow boy, and they loved a lark. They gathered up the butternuts—there had been several quarts in those long blue stockings—and hurled them recklessly at Pitt. The door opened suddenly and Tutor Goodhue stood inside. It happened too suddenly for the nut throwers to forbear, even if it had been altogether certain that they wished to do so. A fusillade of nuts struck the tutor's head; one struck him on the eye, smashing one of the lenses of his glasses. He uttered a sharp cry of pain as a splinter of glass penetrated the eyeball.

"I guess you've got about enough of being my friend!" cried Pitt, with half-hysterical bitterness.

The tutor groped dizzily and leaned upon Pitt's shoulder. Splinters of the glass had scratched his face and blood was trickling down, frightening the boys more than the grave injury to the eye which they did not yet realize.

"Go for a doctor, some of you, quick! quick!" cried Pitt, as he led the tutor away.

CHAPTER VI

“IS—is he in pain?”

In An anxious whisper came to Pitt's ears as he stepped out of the tutor's room into the dimly lighted corridor. It was almost midnight; the bell which meant “all lights out” had rung nearly two hours before; but behind young Gilroy in the corridor were half a dozen boys waiting breathlessly for Pitt's answer. To do them justice, their fear was not all for themselves, although the possible consequences of their recklessness did loom rather large in the background of their consciousness.

“He was in pain; the doctors were obliged to put him under the influence of opiates,” answered Pitt, coldly.

He was angry and dejected. It was Abel Goodhue's watchful care over him that had caused this painful accident, and he felt responsible to a depressing degree. He felt altogether disgusted with those boys, but he said to himself that he did wish the tutor

could have left him to fight his own battles! His own share in the matter, even that dreadful accusation of Corny Woodrow's which had turned the crowd against him as one boy, had been forgotten in the fright and anxiety of the accident to the tutor. Now, as he faced them again, it came back like a stinging blow.

"Will he—will he lose his sight?" asked another boy, falteringly.

"He will lose the sight of that eye, probably. The oculist couldn't be certain," answered Pitt. "The shock to his constitution will be severe, the doctor says. He isn't strong," he added, after a moment of dead silence.

"We never meant to do any such thing as that," said Corny Woodrow, hoarsely.

"It wath only a lark; that ith, it wath meant to be only a lark," said little Kendall Brewer, in a tone of dispassionate explanation.

"Larks don't always turn out as you think they will," said Pitt, sagely; "but I know that some of you fellows didn't mean any harm," he said, generously. He was a boy, and he said to himself that he might

have got into such a scrape as that himself—although he should not have opened another fellow's box; that was against the Beaver Hollow code of honor.

"Butternuts are hard. You would have known that if you had been brought up in Beaver Hollow!" he said grimly, as he turned away toward his own room.

"Thyall we all be thuthpended?" demanded Kendall Brewer, breathlessly.

There was an expectant hush in the dark corner where the boys were grouped, and Pitt kept them for a moment in suspense.

"Mr. Goodhue told the master that it was unintentional; that it was only sport," he said slowly.

There was a subdued murmur in the group that under different circumstances would have been a cheer.

"You may be reprimanded," added Pitt. "I shouldn't suppose there would be anything worse than that."

Again the subdued murmur; that group was used to reprimands and didn't mind them much.

"You—you—you're not such a bad fellow

yourself!" This came from young Gilroy, who stammered when he was excited.

But young Gilroy was apparently alone in this sentiment. Whatever the Grimshaw standard of honor might lack, it was strong against cheating. The boy who had stolen his graduation essay out of a paper was not to be fellowshipped even by the boys who had opened his box and turned his sacred home associations to ridicule.

"It isn't exactly a question of what I am," said Pitt, dryly. "I certainly am not a tell-tale, if that is what you mean. My box has been returned to my room in about as good order as you fellows could manage, I suppose, under the circumstances." A faint smile flickered over Pitt's face, which looked very pale in the dim light. "As for the name that I was called"—there was a wave of color over Pitt's white face, and the boys stood like stone statues and waited as he paused—"and—the accusation that was brought against me, I—I can't refute them now."

Almost a groan came from the dark corner and a faint sibilant sound restrained only by the seriousness of the situation and the fear

of discovery. It made the blood rush to Pitt's head and ring in his ears.

"I can say that they are false"— His voice shook.

"Proof! proof!" came in a whisper from the corner.

"It ithn't the time or plathe to demand proof," said Kendall Brewer, unexpectedly and with dignity.

Pitt had reached the door of his room and he opened it, stood for a moment irresolute, then entered the room and closed the door behind him.

"It's the end of Grimshaw for me, because I can't say anything!" he said aloud, in the privacy of his room. "Great things I am doing to smooth the way for anybody else!" he added, with ineffable self-scorn. "Could Alf Gates have told, after all? Corinna is so far away. I rather guess it's true that murder will out."

He made the slight change in his dress for which he had come, and returned to the tutor's room to spend the remainder of the night beside his bed. The two Concaster nurses, on whom Grimshaw depended in time of need, were both absent for the

Thanksgiving season. Moreover, the tutor had shown great reluctance to have Pitt leave him and Pitt had begged to stay.

The injured man was now in a deep sleep, the result of the opiates that had been given him when the pain in his eyeball became too intense to be borne. As Pitt dropped into an armchair in the dimly-lighted room, where the silence seemed only intensified by the heavy breathing of the sleeper, the bells on the oldest church in Concaster began to ring their midnight chime. It was an ancient chime of bells; some were cracked and rang out of tune. There was a difference of opinion in Concaster as to whether the chime should be allowed to ring at all, disturbing midnight slumbers. But the conservative element was the stronger one in the old city, and "Watchman, tell us of the night" came to Pitt's ears clearly on the still air.

It was as if he were hearing it sung in the Beaver village church. Old Deacon Hiram Tukey's quavering tenor mingled with the bells' chime. "Trarv'ler o'er yon mounting's height," the deacon used to sing, and the boys, sitting behind the stove, were apt

to laugh. Matronly heads would be shaken even before the deacon had reached that line. Heber, too, would laugh, sometimes, good as he was. "Dear old Heber, I didn't mean to do anything to hurt him," murmured Pitt. "Perhaps it's true that you can't very well hurt yourself alone."

"Watchman, does its beauteous ray
Aught of hope or joy foretell?"

It was as if the words rang in his ears. And good Parson Goodhue's face had such an uplifted look! Even the graceless boys behind the stove observed it.

It was he who had brought this trouble upon Parson Goodhue's son! If he could have told them that that wasn't true about the essay! He had cried out, "It's a lie!" obeying his first instinct of self-defense. But he knew there had not been the right ring in his voice. He had been so taken by surprise!

"Peace and truth, its course portends."

Peace and truth! They went together, it appeared. "If only a fellow could always

do what is fair and square and open and above board!" murmured Pitt.

Hannah's face appeared before him, suddenly. She used to turn round and shake her head at the boys behind the stove when their mother wasn't at church. Hannah was the squarest girl; she hated anything that wasn't perfectly open and above board. But in this world one must be diplomatic. "If I can only make things come out right!" said Pitt to himself.

Abel Goodhue tossed restlessly and muttered in his sleep. Pitt feared lest the opiates should lose their effect sooner than the doctors had expected and Abel should awake—awake again to the intense pain. As he bent over him anxiously Abel spoke audibly, opening his eyes wide, yet with a certain lack of intelligence in them which showed that he was still asleep.

"The key!" he said. "Carry the key back! They must know"—The muttering became incoherent, then ceased, and the tutor slept heavily again.

"He is dreaming, poor old fellow!" said Pitt, and smoothed the pillows with a tender pity. Beaver Hollow boys loved Abel Good-

hue, although he had not "caught on"—to use the schoolboy slang current at Grimshaw.

Pitt bethought himself of a letter that he had found in the box from home and had thrust into his pocket unopened in the excitement and distress of the accident. He sat down by the shaded night lamp and opened it. It was in Hannah's careful, laborious hand, with every "i" dotted and every "t" crossed, and the tiniest of blots scraped with the ink eraser. Hannah had said in her first letter that she felt as if she must put on her best dress and her embroidered white apron when she sat down to write a letter that was going to Grimshaw Academy! She didn't want to disgrace him, she said. Pitt remembered that now.

"Disgrace me!" he said to himself with a queer little grimace. "I wish that I had never come here or that I had never"—

The tutor stirred and muttered again in his sleep, giving Pitt the startled sense of a possible listener to his murmured self-reproaches.

"The key! Can't you carry back the

key?" the tutor said clearly, in a tone of distress.

Pitt bent over him. He was still asleep. "There's something on his mind," thought Pitt. "Has everybody a secret? He takes life too hard—feels too responsible about the boys; or else perhaps it's only the effect of the drug."

He sat down again and proceeded to read Hannah's letter.

"We think your letters are beautiful; you make us see just how things are there," wrote Hannah. "Mother read one of your letters to the schoolmaster, and he said he thought you were a remarkably good writer. He said that your graduating essay had really surprised him; he didn't wonder that it had made Uncle Amos think you were very smart."

Pitt made an impatient movement. "Shall I never hear the last of that thing?" he muttered.

"Mother hopes great things of you."

"Mother hopes!" Pitt stirred uneasily again. How many heedless boys have been cut to the quick by those words, "Mother hopes"!

"I heard her tell Parson Goodhue that she hoped you would be a minister. We used to think that Heber would be the minister, you know, before he got the doctoring into his head. That makes me think of a queer thing about Heber that we've just found out. He has been queer anyway, almost ever since you went away. I suppose that he felt worse than we knew because he couldn't go to Grimshaw. He wouldn't show it for fear of spoiling your comfort and ours; and there couldn't be a bit of envy about dear old Heber—that we know. He couldn't have been prouder of the essay if he had written it himself. He had it tucked away in his Bible, printed as if it had been cut out of a newspaper. It fell out when I was dusting in his room. Did you know that it had ever been printed in a paper? I asked him, but he shut me up almost roughly.

"He is very cross for him—and queer. He told me not to say anything about it to anybody, but, of course, there could be no objection to my telling you. If it has been thought worthy of being printed in a paper I think you ought to know it. Heber has


been going off by himself Saturdays, and in all the other time that he could get out of school, and we have only just found out where. It seems that there's a retired physician in East Ephesus who has taken a great interest in Heber, and is teaching him. He's a specialist in nervous diseases, but he doctors the people round here for everything and doesn't ask any pay. He's rich and benevolent. It was so queer that Heber didn't say a word about him! And we shouldn't know how he got acquainted with him if we hadn't heard it by accident.

"Alf Gates came round tin peddling; you know he gave up coming this way, but he has taken it up again; and he told us that Heber had given or sold his son Alf a gun—that old gun that was his father's—just think of it! We wouldn't have believed that Heber would part with that for love or money. Alf said that it was some kind of a boy's trade; he believed that Heber had hired young Alf to keep dark about something that he knew. But that seems too queer to be true, even as Heber is behaving now. What could young Alf Gates know that Heber would want to keep

secret? Father was very indignant. He told the tin peddler that our boys didn't have any dishonorable secrets, nor have to hire anybody to keep still. Alf Gates just laughed and said nothing; you know he can be rather disagreeable sometimes.

"Of course, it isn't possible that Heber could have had any secret that he wanted the boy to keep, but the fact remains that young Alf has the gun and Heber can't be made to say a word, except that it was his gun, and he had a right to do as he pleased with it. I never knew father to get so angry with Heber before. But that was how Heber got acquainted with Doctor Gwynne. I do run on so! I think what Miss Penfold said about my composition was true—that it was 'prolix.' Isn't that a dreadful word? But since I have a brother who could write that essay on 'Our Relations with the Philippines'"—

"Is she going to harp on that string until she drives me crazy?" growled Pitt. He held the letter for a moment above the flame of the lamp. The edges shriveled and blackened, but he withdrew it before the writing became illegible. "There may



be more! I'd better know the worst," he said to himself, grimly. "But there can't be anything worse than to hurt Heber! The dear old boy! Can he have thought"—He shook himself impatiently and resumed the reading of the letter.

"I don't care if I am called prolix. It seems that the gun kicked—whatever that may mean—when young Alf Gates fired it, and hurt him so that he was insensible for a good while. Heber was there—it seems that he had just carried the gun to young Alf—and he ran for this Doctor Gwynne, who lives near the tin peddler's. The doctor took a great fancy to Heber, and he is teaching him—medicine, I suppose, but Heber never says a word. He seemed very much put out, because we had heard about it. This is all so unlike Heber, that, of course, we can't help worrying about him—though Parson Goodhue told father not to. He said he thought the Lord was with Heber. If he is, it seems very funny that Heber should be hiring young Alf Gates to keep dark with a gun!"

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Pitt, angrily, and he tore Hannah's voluminous missive in two

and threw it impatiently from him. Then he gathered it up and held the pieces together so that he could finish reading it.

"How anybody can be so blind as to suspect Heber of being anything but a saint," he said to himself. "A pretty mess I have made of it! I wish that when I promised Abel Goodhue I wouldn't fight I had made a special exception of that sneak, Alf Gates! If anybody could say that he wasn't suffering for a thrashing"—

"We killed the pig," Hannah's letter ran on, "and these are our own sausages; and I send you all the butternuts there were on the tree beside your little hen house. I guess it's the first year that you haven't picked them yourself. It was a bad year for butternuts. I hope the rooster isn't tough. Don't forget to tell us about this when you write. Phoebe Orcutt knit a piece in your muffler, for you to remember her by. She likes Heber, but he doesn't go home with any girl since he's so queer. I wish, and so does mother, that you would tell us if you know what makes Heber so queer. And so no more at present,

"From your affectionate sister,

"HANNAH DOUBLEDAY."

"And so no more! Well, it's enough!" murmured Pitt, sarcastically. "What will she say when she knows? It's queer that not one of them guesses the truth!"

A noise from the bed made Pitt start to his feet. The tutor had raised himself and was reaching for his clothes that hung upon a chair. His eyes were wide open, but expressionless, as before.

"The key! Can't you get somebody to carry back the key?" he murmured. "There's money there! They will find it gone"—

"What key?" Pitt laid his hand upon Abel Goodhue's shoulder and spoke earnestly.

"The key—the key that opens the sluice gates," murmured the tutor.

"He is dreaming of that Indian book we were reading. It's the influence of that opiate," said Pitt to himself. Nevertheless when the tutor had grown quiet again, Pitt looked through all his pockets for a key.

But there was none to be found.

CHAPTER VII

THE tutor was much better the next day, although he was not allowed to leave his darkened room. Pitt stayed with him as closely as he would permit, and the boys came to inquire about his eye, solicitously, and with profuse apologies. The oculist had decided that the sight of the injured eye was safe, and when the remaining three days of the vacation were over the tutor appeared and attended to most of his ordinary duties, his eye closely covered by a green shade.

The boys who had caused his suffering were deeply conscious of the generous forbearance of his attitude toward them, and popularity seemed likely to come to him with a sudden bound. But he was more shrinking and self-conscious than before, the result probably of the nervous shock, thought Pitt. Several times Pitt had been on the point of asking him whether anything about a key had been worrying him in

his sleep on the night of the accident; but the tutor, with all his timidity, was not a person upon whom one intruded rashly; and Pitt's own circumstances just now gave him the habit of respecting privacies, small and great.

In the two hours of recreation, one afternoon, Pitt obtained leave to go down town to do some shopping. He wanted Abel Goodhue to go with him, but the tutor was not yet strong enough. He was pale and haggard on this day, and Pitt was waiting for him to explain a nocturnal vigil which seemed to him very mysterious.

Pitt had been awakened in the small hours by the sound of stealthy footsteps passing his door. It was a remote corridor where he and the tutor roomed, and it led only to the gymnasium. The housekeeper's was the only other room that opened from it. Pitt instantly suspected some mischief afoot among the boys, and he dressed hurriedly and went out into the corridor. The footsteps had gone in the direction of the "gym," and Pitt followed softly. The door of the reception room—used for business meetings and entertainments—was ajar;

and, looking in, Pitt saw in the moonlight a figure beside the little desk in the corner, the desk in which the Gridiron Club kept its papers.

Was he going to discover that some Gridiron fellow was meddling with the club's papers—the ball game or tennis records—taking advantage of the secretary's measles and the consequent delay in discovery?

Pitt waited, his heart thumping furiously in his ears.

A key turned in the lock of the desk and the figure advanced toward the door. The moonlight fell across the face and Pitt recognized, with amazement, the tutor. He was about to speak, but the stealthiness of Abel Goodhue's gait and air restrained him. It was evident that he feared discovery, and Pitt shrank behind a window drapery and emerged only when the tutor's footsteps had died away in the direction of his room.

Pitt referred to the fact that he had heard footsteps in the night, when he met the tutor in the morning, expecting some explanation. Abel Goodhue's face looked vaguely troubled; he even cast a suspicious glance upon Pitt, but he said nothing. Pitt

thought that the worn and haggard expression of his countenance had deepened.

Comrades of his own had returned, but Pitt spurned them all now—who would choose to be his comrade when he had been denounced as a sneak and a cheat?—and went down town alone.

He had not answered Hannah's letter; he had found that too difficult a task. Hannah was one of those round-eyed persons before whom deceit slinks even more than before the sharp-eyed; so he had decided to send her a present instead. He had some money that would not be needed now, as he thought bitterly, to pay any dues to the Gridiron Club.

A comfortable little roll of bills, more money than he had ever possessed before, was tucked into his jacket pocket. In Beaver Hollow a family council would have been called to decide how all that money should be spent. They thought in Beaver Hollow that twenty dollars was a great deal of money.

A boy ran against him as Pitt paused in the crowd. It was little Kendall Brewer, who said, "It ith a pleathant day," with un-

wonted ceremony, and gazed curiously at Pitt's roll of bills. Pitt responded with a flush on his face. A boy who was known as a sneak and a cheat must be glad when even little Kendall Brewer would speak to him!

He stood doubtfully before a milliner's window. He was determined that Hannah should have, for once, something that she really wanted. She was quite accustomed to having things for a variety of other reasons—because they could be made out of somebody's old things, because they were cheap, or would last, or could be made over.

Pitt had a sympathy for that sort of trials, which is somewhat rare in a boy. He knew just what Hannah wanted—had been wanting for years. It was a hat with a pink feather, and he meant that she should have it. Extravagant or frivolous or foolish though it might be, he meant that she should have it. "Some people don't know what it is for a girl never to have anything that she wants," said Pitt to himself, in defense of his extravagance. He would have bought a gun for Heber, but the last thing that Heber wanted was to shoot things.

Pitt meant to get the gun which Heber treasured because it was his father's, from that rascal of an Alf Gates, one of these days, when he could straighten things out.

It was embarrassing in the millinery shop. The girls turned away their heads to smile when he asked for a hat with a pink feather, and the one who waited on him was over-elaborate in her politeness. Was it an evening hat or a carriage hat that he wished?—or possibly it was for a reception? They were dress hats upon which pink feathers were used, she explained.

It was just for all the time, Pitt explained; and, although his face was red, he added, stoutly, that it was for a very pretty girl.

The attendant produced from a glass case in an inner room an extremely elaborate piece of headgear. It was made of white lace, shining beads, and pink feathers. It was bewildering to Pitt's unaccustomed eyes, but he felt sure that Hannah would understand it. The girl put it upon her head and posed before him.

Pitt said in a gruff, embarrassed voice that it was just the thing, and he would

take it. He thought it might be four or five dollars, and that his mother would be dismayed at his extravagance, but he was in a reckless mood.

The attendant placed it in a box—a very large box, for the pink feathers were tall.

“Sixteen dollars, please. Will you have it sent?” she asked respectfully.

Sixteen dollars for a hat! Pitt caught his breath. He had not known that such a thing could be!

But he wasn't going to let those girls find out how dismayed he was. He assumed an indifferent air as he counted out the money. He felt sure that it was successful, but it is doubtful, after all, whether those sharp-eyed girls didn't see through it.

“I will carry it myself,” he said, in a firm voice, and walked out of the shop behind a great square box that would form a very unpleasant contrast to the little round band-box on the upper shelf of the spare-room closet, where his mother kept the “best bonnet” that she had worn for five years.

The way to the express office led through a great many streets. Pitt had upon his cap the letters that were the badge of Grim-

shaw Academy, and people looked curiously at him and at the great bandbox. He met little Kendall Brewer again on the main street; another Grimshaw boy was with him, and they both stared and laughed.

"Hired out to a milliner, Doubleday?" called Hazen, the other boy.

Of course, Pitt cared nothing for that. There was another reason than the carrying of the bandbox for his turning red and white when he met a Grimshaw boy.

He had the bandbox sent to "Miss Hannah Doubleday, Beaver Hollow," and then there was nothing to do but to go back to the academy. He had hoped to buy something for every one in the family, as well as Hannah, but his laundry bill was due and he dared not spend any more money.

The social atmosphere at Grimshaw that night was strange and uncomfortable. Pitt felt it at the supper table, in the study hour, most of all at recreation time. Not a boy would speak to him who could by any possibility avoid it. Now that the tutor's eyesight was out of danger, and their pranks had been covered partly by his forbearance, they had made an agreement together to

ostracize him, thought Pitt, bitterly. Yet what could a fellow expect who could not deny that he had got to Grimshaw by cheating in the meanest kind of way?

Pitt was not without the virtue of complete candor, even when he was a victim.

A message came to his room just before the bell rang for "all lights out." He was to present himself in the head master's room at eight o'clock the next morning.

He lay tossing upon his bed that night, while the chimes rang out the old hymn that carried the Christmas spirit all through the year for Concaster. Yet it was sadly true that there were people in Concaster who scarcely seemed to know that Christ had been born.

"Traveler, darkness takes its flight,
Doubt and terror are withdrawn."

"Not yet awhile, I guess!" said Pitt to himself, bitterly, as the words seemed to beat themselves out upon his brain. "When a fellow, who has always been as straight as he knew how, gets into a little bit of trouble, then there's nobody to believe in him!"

It was Deacon Tukey's voice now, in the old Beaver Village church, and Hannah was smiling at him—smiling joyously, with pink feathers waving above her high forehead. His mother was there, smiling, too—not shaking her head, because there was mischief going on behind the stove.

A blessed sense of peace stole over Pitt as he lapsed into deep slumber. Those two, his mother and Hannah, would always believe in him!

Doctor Coxe, the head master of Grimshaw, was a small man with great dignity and piercing eyes. A theory prevailed among the Grimshaw boys that those eyes could see through a fellow whatever he might be trying to hide. Certain it was that they had more than once brought the guilty to a wholly unintended confession.

Pitt faced them next morning, pale and ill at ease. The housekeeper was in the study, too. Pitt wondered, vaguely, why she should be there and should look at him so severely.

Abel Goodhue came in and sat down beside the master—beside him, but nearer to Pitt, who looked at him with a wan smile.

So Abel had to know, too! He would feel the disgrace of a Beaver Hollow boy. He hoped that it would not restore the tutor's old unpopularity in the school that he had been so intimate with him.

He was rehearsing over and over in his mind what he would say. He would tell them that he could not explain about the essay yet, but perhaps later on he could. Why should they not believe him—a fellow who had always been straight?

"Where were you night before last?" demanded Doctor Coxe, and the piercing eyes were on Pitt's face.

"In—in bed," stammered Pitt, but promptly, and not without a sense of relief. Nothing had happened at Grimshaw that he could not explain!

"Were you in the gymnasium at midnight, or after?"

In a flash Pitt recalled his discovery of the tutor. He looked at Abel Goodhue and his face blanched. Abel was regarding him fixedly, anxiously. His face looked drawn and haggard.

"The suspicion against you is so serious that perhaps I should put the question in a

more definite form," said the head master, judicially, when Pitt's hesitation had lasted for fully a minute.

"A sum of money has been stolen from the desk in the gymnasium reception room. The key was inadvertently left in the desk by the treasurer of the Gridiron Club, who, remembering the fact in his illness, sent a message to the president of the club asking him to see whether the money was safe and to lock the desk. The money, as I have said, was missing. You were seen by Mrs. Canwell to steal softly away from the gymnasium door and down the corridor the night before it was discovered that the money was missing. You have said that you were in bed. Would you like to correct that statement?"

The piercing eyes were on his face. Pitt turned away and looked at Abel Goodhue. There was a look of piteous appeal on the tutor's face. What could it mean? Pitt felt utterly dazed.

"I was there, sir; Mrs. Canwell is quite right. I had forgotten it for the moment." Pitt's own voice sounded strange in his ears, as if it belonged to someone else. He

shrank from the solution of the mystery that was evolving itself in his own mind. Could Abel Goodhue, with his saintliness, with the look of his father about him, with the Beaver Hollow traditions of unwavering honesty as the breath of his nostrils, be a common thief?

It was not to be believed! Yet why did the tutor look at him with such wistful appeal?

"You had forgotten it?" echoed the head master, in a tone of amazement. "Was it so common a thing to haunt the gymnasium at that hour of the night that the matter slipped your memory?"

"No, sir; I never went before. But I forgot, because it—it wasn't very important." Pitt stammered and looked down. He could see that the tutor was still regarding him with the same eager, anxious gaze, and the tutor's face was so drawn and tense that it looked suddenly old. Pitt had a vague, bewildered fancy that it was old Parson Goodhue's face, full of reproach and appeal.

"Will you tell me why you went?" The head master's words had seemed to Pitt like icy drops that chilled him as they fell; but

now there came into his voice a strain of earnestness that sounded kind. Into Pitt's struggling consciousness stole the soothing sense that the master wished him to clear himself of the dreadful suspicion.

"I was following Tutor Goodhue!" It almost burst from his lips, this sentence, that instantly formed itself in his brain in answer to Doctor Coxe's question. Almost, but not quite! The tradition of sanctity surrounding Parson Goodhue and his son was so strong! One imbibed them in the Beaver Hollow air. To betray Abel would mean to be untrue to those traditions; it would be to bring Parson Goodhue's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave! Moreover, the tutor was weak; never quite like a man among men. He (Pitt) was strong—strong and almost a man. Would it not be cowardly for him to betray what he knew? the knowledge that he had gained stealthily?

He turned his eyes deliberately upon the tutor. Now was his chance to tell the truth and save him from the false accusation!

The look in Abel Goodhue's face was now an agony of pleading.

"I cannot tell you why I went there,"

said Pitt, firmly. And although he doubted whether his reasoning might not be false, his self-sacrifice all wrong, yet for the moment he was buoyed up, as was natural, by committing himself to a definite line of conduct.

There was a dead silence in the room for a moment or two after Pitt had given his answer. When the master spoke his words fell again like icy drops.

"Were you in possession of a considerable amount of money yesterday?" he inquired.

The hot blood rushed to Pitt's face. What a net was closing about him! In his perplexity about the tutor, he had not thought of that "incriminating circumstance." Kendall Brewer had told about the roll of bills!

"Yes, sir, I had twenty dollars," he answered. Then by the little stir of emotion shown by all his listeners, he knew that the money stolen had been twenty dollars.

"Was this money a part of your regular allowance?" asked the head master.

"I don't have any allowance," said Pitt. "I—I earned the money."

His face was scarlet, now, instead of white, but he was almost at ease and his voice was steady.

"How did you earn it?" asked the head master.

"I—I can't explain how. I am bound by a promise. Later on I can—that is, I think I can," faltered Pitt.

It sounded pitifully lame and weak as a defense, although the young voice was frank.

"It is unfortunate that there is so much that you cannot explain," said Doctor Coxe, dryly. "It is seldom that a Grimshaw boy is found destitute of common honesty. I am loth to believe that it is so in this case. But you must see that circumstantial evidence is strong against you, and, coupled with your inability to explain what is mysterious"—

"Pitt, for my sake!" cried the tutor; "for the sake of your father and mother, for the honor of Beaver Hollow that you have seemed to think so much of, tell all that you can!" He had risen and laid his hand on Pitt's shoulder and his face was pallid.

For the honor of Beaver Hollow!—when he was sacrificing so much for it that he felt heroic like those who die for home and fatherland! Pitt felt suddenly the irony of the situation.

"Do you—you want me to tell?" he gasped. "I followed someone to the 'gym' that night," he went on hurriedly. "I heard stealthy steps passing my door. I followed and I saw someone at the desk in the reception room."

"You saw someone there?" Doctor Coxe was alert and eager now, rather than judicial. "Who was it?"

Pitt felt the hand upon his shoulder shake.

"I cannot tell," he said, firmly.

"It is a mistaken self-sacrifice that shields a thief," said Doctor Coxe, sententiously. "I cannot suppose that a sensible boy like you would make it. Think of the disgrace you bring upon your family!"

Pitt's eyes took on the look of a hunted animal. Couldn't they see that there was a kind of perplexity that was enough to drive a fellow mad? He shuffled uneasily upon his feet and stammered shamefacedly.

"I—I guess you don't understand just how we feel about things at Beaver Hollow," he said.

CHAPTER VIII

“**D**ID you ever!” exclaimed one of the girls in the millinery shop to another. “That nice, innocent-looking Grimshaw boy who bought the pink hat had stolen the money! It tells all about it in the Concaster Dial! That’s what that little lisping fellow meant when he came in here and asked us what the boy bought and how much he paid for it and how much money he seemed to have. It was twenty dollars that was stolen. I saw that he hadn’t much left when he paid for the hat. They didn’t prove it, and he has been suspended pending further investigation, instead of being arrested. They say that Doctor Coxe can’t bear to have a Grimshaw boy arrested for stealing. But it’s perfectly evident that he’s guilty. The whole story is in the Dial. He is a country boy, too—from Beaver Hollow, away up back somewhere.”

“Did you ever! Well, I always say there’s as much wickedness in the country

as there is anywhere else," said the other girl as she arranged a hat effectively in the window.

"That's so," said the first girl, half absently. "But I shall always say that he was a real nice-appearing boy."

Meanwhile the "nice-appearing boy" was journeying to Beaver Hollow by train, still so bewildered and the prey of such conflicting emotions that he sometimes had a wild fancy that he was not Pitt Doubleday, of Beaver Hollow, but someone else altogether.

Abel Goodhue was with him. He had suffered a kind of nervous collapse, the result of the accident to his eye, it was supposed, and at his physician's suggestion had been given a month's leave of absence. It had been his own desire to go home at once with Pitt. The boy was willing to care for him, but a little sensitive about the surveillance that the tutor seemed to be exercising over him. Were they afraid he would run away? he said to himself, angrily, or was it the tutor's way of trying to make him think that he believed him guilty?

Altogether puzzling was the tutor's attitude. He had made another, a private, ap-

peal to Pitt to tell all that he knew and not shield the guilty. He had called upon him, as Doctor Coxe had done, to remember his duty to his family. And Pitt had asked himself whether he were crazy or dreaming, or whether Abel Goodhue were an arch hypocrite.

Perhaps he was not the thief, but had been in the "gym" for another purpose. Then why did he not say so? Loyalty to a fellow like this was folly, Pitt was saying to himself, as the train bore him swiftly onward to the home that was disgraced by him. But the loyalty was to dear old Parson Goodhue—who in the outside world could understand what his boys felt for him?—and to Beaver Hollow, whose parson's son was held sacred. Abel Goodhue's downfall would be known much farther and remembered much longer than Pitt Doubleday's. There was that text, too, about the strong bearing the burdens of the weak. It seemed an unmanly thing to betray Abel Goodhue. What was it that Parson Goodhue had said, brokenly, with his hand on his head, when he bade him good-by?

"Quit you like a man, my boy! Our

Lord was the great exemplar of the manly life. And—and whatever befalls, remember we are all in the hands of the God who sent us his Son.”

It was manly to bear the burdens of the weak. That was what had made Pitt shield the tutor so impulsively.

Now as he left the scene of his painful struggle behind him and his brain gradually cleared, a reaction ensued and he was assailed by doubts. He felt a strong disgust for his companion, especially when he met the wistful, pleading expression of the tutor's weak face. He went away by himself on pretext of looking out of the window at the other side of the car.

“I feel too much like punching his head or throwing him out of the window!” he said to himself, the natural boy being uppermost. After all, there was much to be said for the simple boy ethics of Beaver Hollow, in which Abel Goodhue didn't believe. A mean sneak would understand a thrashing while self-sacrifice was thrown away on him, thought Pitt. As they neared the junction where the Beaver Hollow stage met the train, Pitt returned to the tutor.

"I think I shall keep on to Portland and see Uncle Amos! I have just money enough. It isn't because I dread going home. I know I've got to face that. But I think I ought to tell Uncle Amos and— and ask his advice about—about ruining myself to keep the other fellow's secret."

It had come to that with Pitt and he looked steadfastly into Abel Goodhue's face as he said it.

The tutor did not flinch. He looked relieved and his face brightened.

"I think you are right," he said quietly. "It is a great relief to me to know that you will tell someone. I think he will advise you against the self-sacrifice. I hoped that the thief would confess, but that seems to be past hoping for."

"Yes," said Pitt in a hard voice, "that seems to be past hoping for."

He did not go out of the car to help the tutor upon the Beaver Hollow stage. His revulsion of feeling was strong, as was natural in a boy.

So the train rushed on, carrying him, full of bitter thoughts, to face Uncle Amos with the dreadful truth that in less than two

months from the time of his admission to Grimshaw he had been suspended under a most disgraceful suspicion. He had confided a little secret to Uncle Amos when he entered Grimshaw. It seemed only honorable to do so when he became his beneficiary. The person who held his promise in the matter had given him leave. It was the secret of a very ambitious plan and Uncle Amos had given it his sanction, telling Pitt that he was a fine fellow and he was proud of him.

Where would his pride be now? Yet one must play the manly part—if only one knew what it was! Uncle Amos was a man of the world. He would certainly denounce Abel Goodhue if he was told the truth. No loyalty to Parson Goodhue or to Beaver Hollow traditions would influence him. He would not even understand how strong such things could be.

So Pitt went on, still undecided what he should say to Uncle Amos.

Heber was waiting at Beaver Village inn, where the stage route ended. His face looked pitifully worn and dejected.

"Pitt?" he asked, anxiously, as the tutor

alighted and grasped his hand, laying the other affectionately on his shoulder.

"He went on to see your Uncle Amos. He—he thought an explanation was due to him. I think—I hope that he will also tell him what he had refused to reveal to anyone else—who the thief really was." The tutor spoke falteringly, with an evident effort.

Heber's heavy face brightened a little. "Doctor Coxe said in his letter that Pitt had seen someone at the desk, but wouldn't tell who it was," he said; and then he sighed heavily. "It isn't believable that Pitt would steal," he added, and his eyes sought the tutor's face for confirmation of this assertion.

"Of course it isn't!" said the tutor, warmly. "But I've tried in vain to guess who it is he is shielding. There is a mystery!"

Heber turned away in silence. There was another mystery where Pitt was concerned, he thought, dejectedly.

If a boy would steal his graduation essay, would he hesitate to steal money? That was the problem which had been torturing Heber since Doctor Coxe's letter had come. He had guarded carefully that shameful

secret about the essay—he and Phineas. He had suffered agonies of self-abasement in dickering with young Alf Gates, who had demanded further remuneration for his silence after the gun had “kicked.” The only compensation for these trials had been the friendship of Doctor Gwynne, whose acquaintance he had made on the day of Alf’s injury. But not even with him had he shared Pitt’s secret.

“Where is Pitt?” asked old Parson Goodhue, almost before he touched his son’s hand or looked into his face. They had sent for the parson to come to the Doubleday farm when they had received the head master’s letter. It was the Beaver Hollow custom when there was trouble.

Heber heard the tutor explain as he (Heber) mounted to the wagon seat beside Phineas and noticed the sad inflection of the old minister’s voice.

“Pitt did not come.” That was all he said to Phineas, and he declined to meet the inquiry in the hired man’s honest eyes.

“I’m afeard! I’m afeard!” said Phineas, huskily. For Phineas could not help thinking of the essay.

Pitt’s mother ran out to meet the wagon,

with her apron over her head. Pitt had not come? Her strong motherly face worked convulsively and her bosom heaved.

Heber explained that he had gone on to see Uncle Amos. He had thought it was due to him to explain, and he was going to ask his advice about telling of the real thief.

"Then it will come all right—as Parson Goodhue said!" cried Pitt's mother. "For his uncle is a man of sense. Why should Pitt be bearing a thief's disgrace for anyone?"

Hannah was at the door with the pink hat on her head. It seemed to brighten the whole lane as if for a festival. Hannah's mother had not wanted her to put it on, but she had persisted. Was she to behave to Pitt as if she thought him a thief?

Pitt's mother had found the tag inside the hat—while Hannah's mind was altogether upon the pink feathers—upon which the price was marked. She had tried to find out from the Beaver Village milliner whether a hat had ever cost sixteen dollars, beating all about the bush that the milliner might not suspect her reason.

The milliner averred that she had, with

her own eyes, seen, on her visits to the city, hats that cost twenty dollars! After that Pitt's mother, in spite of all her stout asseverations, had felt a little gnawing tooth of doubt. For where could Pitt have got twenty dollars?

Hannah was fresher from fairy-book possibilities. Anything might be expected to happen in Concaster, and especially when a boy was as clever as Pitt. She never even questioned the price of the pink hat. She took it as if it were the natural efflorescence of Pitt's cleverness and goodness. Hannah knew nothing about the stolen essay. Heber was still making it worth while for Alf Gates to keep the secret. He was sacrificing all his boyish treasures, and the ignoble bribery was wearing on his honest soul. His face showed the strain so that Mrs. Doubleday brewed herbs for him constantly, with an anxious mind, and Hannah insisted upon his having all the preserves.

Abel Goodhue's condition caused anxiety all over the village and the Hollow. He had always looked like his mother, who had been delicate and died early. He had also inherited the parson's nervous temperament,

which had made him an invalid in his youth, and perhaps had had its part in keeping him, a man of great ability, in a narrow sphere—to the inestimable gain of Beaver Village and Beaver Hollow.

Some people hoped that it was only the green shade over his eye that gave Abel that look of extreme pallor and exhaustion, but everyone was glad when Doctor Gwynne, the great nerve specialist, who had retired from the busy world to East Ephesus, took his case in hand. Parson Goodhue's sweet serenity suffered no apparent lapse, yet the loving eyes of his congregation detected a new tremor in his voice, and a wistful anxiety in his eyes whenever he bent them upon his son.

Doctor Gwynne drove rapidly away from Beaver Hollow lest he should be besieged with inquiries. He feared to lose the seclusion for which he had left the world. He spoke of Beaver Hollow as that queer little place where even the boys loved the minister.

Pitt came home in less than a week, pale and miserable. No, he had not told Uncle Amos who the thief was. Uncle Amos had

called him a fool. "Yes, perhaps he was one," he admitted when his mother cordially indorsed Uncle Amos's opinion. His father had had another serious attack of rheumatism, and it had not been thought wise to tell him of Pitt's disgrace. Pitt was forced to keep out of his way, there being no plausible explanation of a vacation at this time. This was one of the bitterest drops in Pitt's bitter cup. He had so strongly desired that his father should feel in his failing strength that he had a strong young shoulder to lean upon.

A fool? yes, but yet he had done the only thing that a fellow—a Beaver Hollow fellow—could do, he declared. It wasn't always smooth sailing in this world, even when a fellow meant to do right.

He avoided the minister, to that good man's great grief. But he couldn't avoid his mother. She came into his room after he had gone to bed and asked him where he had got the money that he had paid for Hannah's hat. He told her that that matter would be explained, he hoped, soon. He was expecting a letter that would release him from a promise not to tell.

His mother groaned as she went out. When your own mother ceases to believe in you things are pretty bad! Pitt was tempted to tie up his clothes in a bundle and run away in the night, like a boy in a story. But that would be regarded as a confession of guilt and it wouldn't be a manly thing to do. Whatever came, he meant to do the manly thing.

He took Heber into his confidence the next day. It was when he came home from Alf Gates's, bringing Heber's gun and several other valued possessions with which the latter had bribed Alf Gates to silence.

He was carrying them up to the woodshed chamber where they belonged, when he encountered Heber, who was carrying in an armful of wood.

He had not decided how much he would tell Heber, when he called to him to follow him up to the wood-shed chamber.

He dropped Heber's treasures in a heap upon the floor—the gun, the traps, fishing rods and books, fox and geese board and a stuffed parrot. (Polly had been dear to Heber's heart, and when she died the horse doctor had stuffed her for him.)

"You're an awfully good fellow, Heber," he said as he sat down astride a big pumpkin and mopped his brow, for the load had been heavy and there had been some ceremonies with Alf Gates in the readjustment of property rights which had been fatiguing. Just what the ceremonies were or whether he had previously been absolved from his promise to the tutor never transpired.

"An awfully good fellow, but you'd better have left Alf Gates alone. He's a handful for me!"

"You're square, Pitt! In spite of everything I believe you're square!" burst from Heber, as he dangled his long legs from the meal chest.

"If I am, I'm in a round hole," said Pitt feebly, but jocosely, to hide his emotions. Then he poured forth to Heber the story of Abel Goodhue's visit to the desk where the stolen money was kept—the secret that he was keeping at so dear a cost.

"Uncle Amos said I was a fool to keep such a secret for anybody," said Pitt. "He would have stuck to that if he had known who it was. He doesn't know Beaver Hollow! What would you do?"

Heber's face had grown blank with dismay as he listened. His whole figure seemed to shrink and droop as he sat silent upon the meal chest.

"But Abel never stole the money, you know," he said at length. "It could all be explained."

"Then why doesn't he explain it?" demanded Pitt. "I've tried to make him admit that he was there, but he never will."

"Let me tell Doctor Gwynne," said Heber. "Abel is his patient and he will treat it as he does all medical secrets; they're like the secrets of the confessional, he always says."

Pitt demurred, but he yielded to Heber at last. He was fairly worn out, he said, with trying to think things out for himself. All Beaver Hollow knew that Doctor Gwynne was taking an especial interest in Abel Goodhue's case. Abel had gone to the doctor's house to be under the doctor's constant care.

Not long after that a strange visitor appeared at the Doubleday farm; a stranger to everyone but Pitt, but he soon made the others recognize him as Erastus Copp, who had spent a summer at Beaver Hollow two years before.

"I declare you're grown to be a young man!" said Mrs. Doubleday, to the tall, mustachioed youth who carried himself in a brisk and businesslike way.

"Glad to hear you say so! My uncle thinks I'm not old enough to edit a paper, and that's how I came to get Pitt into such an ugly scrape. He didn't want me to have boys for contributors, so I had to make Pitt promise not to tell that he wrote for the *Corinna Courier*. A good many people wouldn't have believed that a boy not quite seventeen wrote that article on 'Our Relations with the Philippines,' or the sketches of school life that he has done since. By the way, Pitt, you got that twenty-dollar cheque all right? You never said a word about it in your letter. Pretty much excited, though, weren't you, old boy, when you wrote? I was down with the measles—awfully prevalent this winter—or I should have been here before. So when you read that article for a graduating essay, they said you stole it! A Grimshaw boy that I know got hold of that story from East Ephesus, somehow. I stopped at Concaster on my way here. Used to be a Grimshaw boy myself. Told

the doctor the whole story, and made him let me read some of your school-life sketches to the boys. They pricked up their ears, I can tell you. I've made it all right with my uncle. He wants you on the paper, next year!"

Pitt looked round at the circle of astonished faces, as the editor of the *Corinna Courier* paused for breath.

"I—I settled it with Uncle Amos that I should get a place on the paper next year—I proved to him that I had a knack at that sort of thing," he said, modestly.

"I should think so!" interpolated the editor, fervently.

"And I've struggled to learn to write good English; and Uncle Amos promised that Heber, who is likely to be a minister or a great doctor, should go to Grimshaw instead of me next year."

"Only a country paper, the *Corinna Courier*," said the editor, modestly. "Not altogether worthy of Pitt's talents, but good practice for a beginner. But what is this they told me about a grave charge against you, Pitt? I didn't pay much attention, it was so absurd, but the master questioned

me about a cheque I had said I sent you, and the fellows behaved queerly."

"I—I'll tell you!" Heber stood forth, eagerly, his stooping shoulders almost erect, a light in his clear gray eyes. "I didn't dare to tell you before for fear it wouldn't come true, but it will, I know it will! Things do straighten out so that the truth is shown. Doctor Gwynne says that Abel Goodhue walks in his sleep! He thinks he took the money and hid it in his sleep! He has found out that he knew that the key had been left in the desk, and that he was anxious lest the boys should lose their money. He is going back to Grimshaw with Abel—Doctor Coxe had given his consent, and he is going to watch to see if Abel doesn't go to the 'gym' again in his sleep and show where he hid the money. It—it sounds like a story book, too good to be true; but Doctor Gwynne understands Abel's condition, and he says that there are nine chances out of ten that he will do it."

"Abel Goodhue! Abel? It was Abel that you saw?" gasped Mrs. Doubleday. She arose deliberately and went over to the wood box where Pitt sat, and hugged him.

"I don't know as 'twas right; I suppose 'twas foolish! But I don't know but I should have done it myself!" she said.

"It makes me think of the old-country loyalty to a king—the way you feel toward that old minister," said Erastus Copp.

If it did seem like a story book and too good to be true, as Heber said, things came to pass exactly as Dr. Gwynne had predicted. He had not been three days at Grimshaw before he had the head master called in the night to see, with him, the tutor steal softly to the "gym," try the desk and find it locked, then go to a little niche in the wainscoting, hidden by a curtain, and withdraw a little roll of bills.

He tried again to open the desk, but it was securely locked. Then he sought another hiding place for the money and found it between the leaves of a book upon the desk.

"He must not be awakened," the doctor said, and it was not until the next day that he knew he was the thief for whose sake Pitt had borne so much. Pitt went back to school immediately. The letter in which Doctor Coxe requested him to do so was

very dignified but sympathetic, even affectionate, to one who could read, as Pitt did, between the lines.

He went in the old pung, for there was snow on the ground. Phineas had a load of poultry which their old horse Nutmeg could draw. They were waylaid on the Concaster main street by a crowd of Grimshaw boys who had discovered when Pitt was coming. The frosty morning air was filled with wild cheers for the boy from Beaver Hollow.

When a Grimshaw boy had been "downed" unfairly, they explained, they meant to make it up to him. And this was a fellow who had backbone!

They took the astonished old Nutmeg out of the shafts and themselves drew the pung round the Concaster streets, the long way to the academy. Then they carried Pitt round the grounds on their shoulders with jubilant hurrahs, and so into the academy, which he had left in disgrace.

"I rather think it will be all right for the Beaver Hollow boy who will come after me!" Pitt said to himself.

He lay awake that night, too happy and

excited to sleep, while the old chimes rang out in the midnight stillness, "Watchman, tell us of the night," just the way that Deacon Tukey sang it! And the rain came down on his head! That was a shame. He meant to shingle the church himself, perhaps by next year. He would build a new one, some day! And Abel would be well—well, if never very strong, Doctor Gwynne said. He (Pitt) was strong. He must look out for them all, especially for Heber. Things did straighten themselves out, as Heber said, if a fellow did his best.

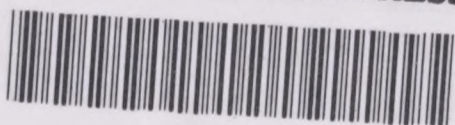
"We are all in the hands of God—the God who sent us his Son." That was what Pastor Goodhue had said.

Deacon Tukey was singing again, and Pitt knew, somehow, that it was under a mended roof—and Hannah's face shone under nodding pink feathers—

"Traveler, lo, the Prince of Peace,
Lo, the Son of God has come!"

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